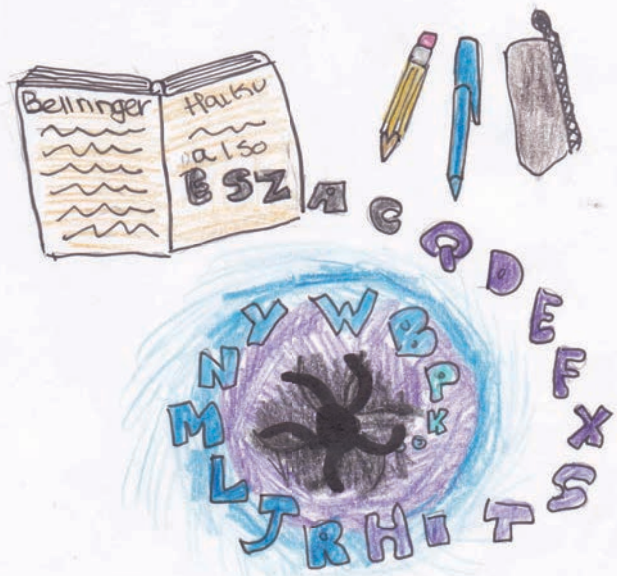


CLASS of 2016 PUBLICATIONS

with help From Ryan Sagre



Forward **by Ryan C. Sagare**

On the first day of school in my new home and new country Brazil, I was welcomed by the 8th graders of Escola Americana do Rio de Janeiro: the class of 2016. As I watched the eager, bright-eyed students enter the classroom and stare at their new gringo teacher, one brave girl approached me with a smile and seemingly warm demeanor. She stood silently examining me, as I anxiously awaited what would certainly be a friendly welcome.

"My mom used to teach this class. I wish she still was," the student said confidently. And so began my new job as a deflated 8th grade English teacher.




I cannot help but make the comparison to surfing when I think of teaching this class. On some days you are having the time of your life and everything just seems to work out perfectly; the waves are perfectly in sync with your board. These are the days that the lesson goes smoothly and the kids are all on task, learning. On other days you aren't even able to make it out to where the waves are breaking; you feel like giving up and heading to Polis Sucos. This is the equivalent to a day in the classroom where the kids are off task, confused, and a royal pain in the butt. In surfing, whether or not you catch a great wave or get pounded on the head by twenty, you know that when it's all said and done, you are going to have a smile on your face and feel a sense of accomplishment, recognizing you gave it your all and did something positive with your time. I love surfing and have loved teaching the class of 2016.





The works that are presented in this book are a glimpse into many hours of hard work in room number 520. I am extremely proud of their development as young writers; furthermore, I am excited about how they have grown and who they will become. Each and everyone of us brought something unique, genuine, and honest to the table, and as a result, I believe we have become better human beings.

I hope you enjoy these stories as much as I do. More importantly, I hope one day you will have the opportunity to know the faces behind these stories - the faces of the class of 2016.

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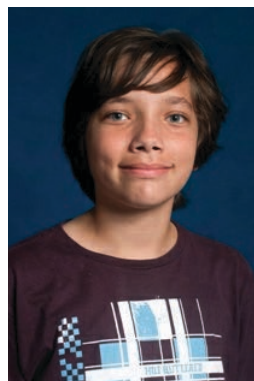
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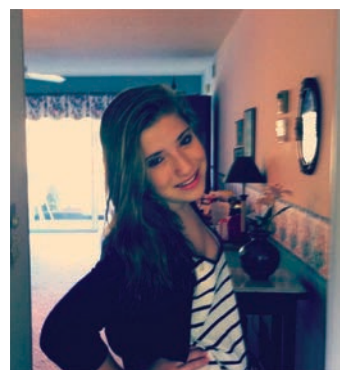
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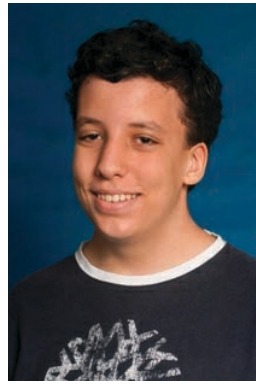
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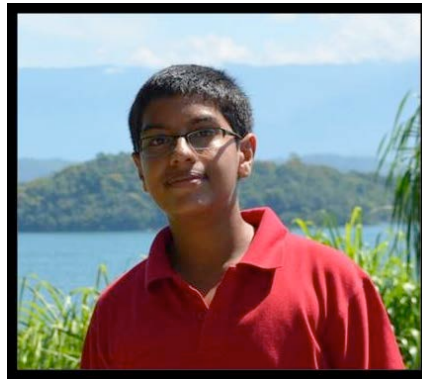
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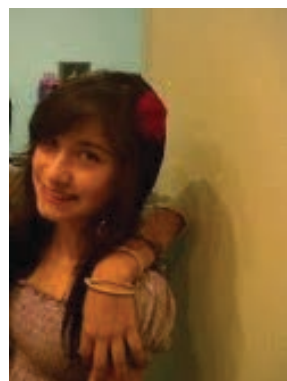
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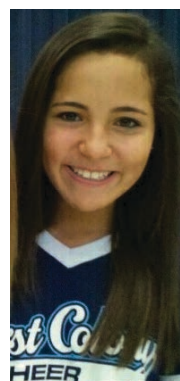
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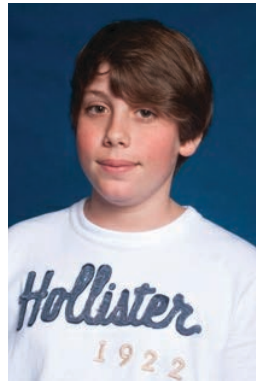
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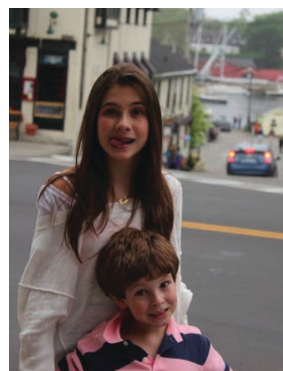
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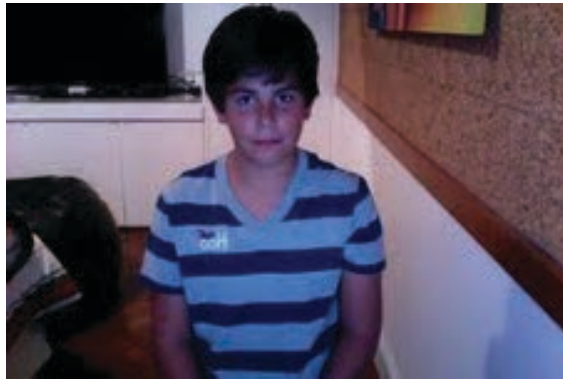
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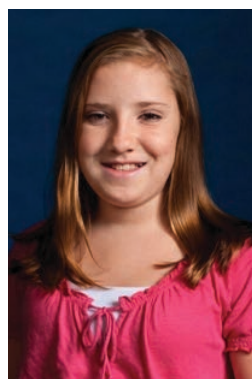
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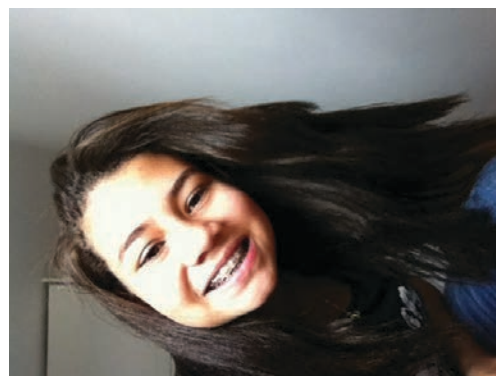
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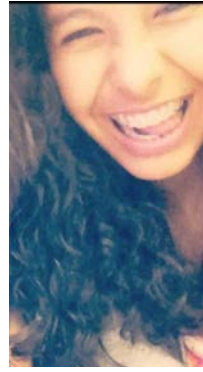
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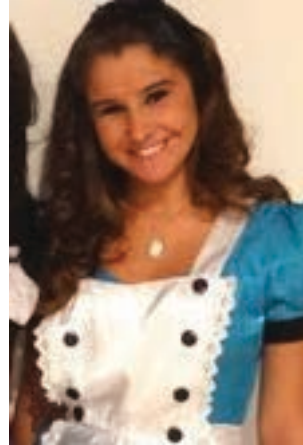
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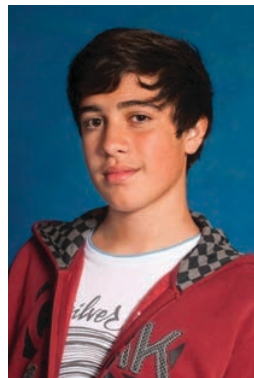
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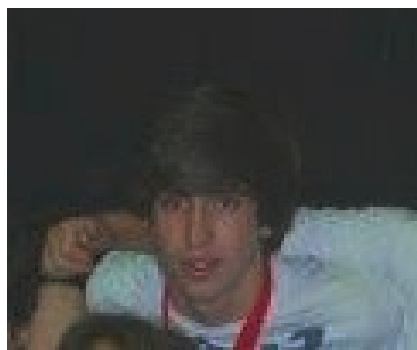
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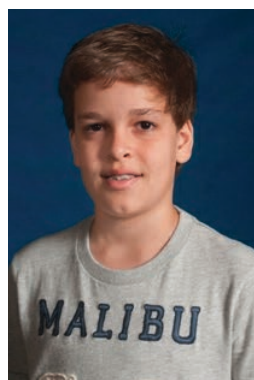
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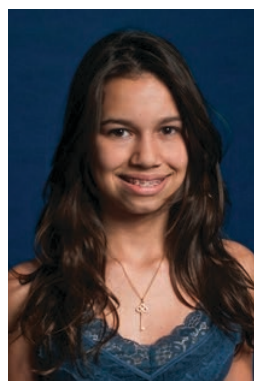
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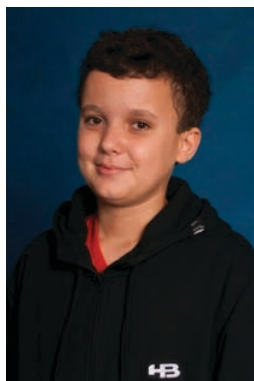
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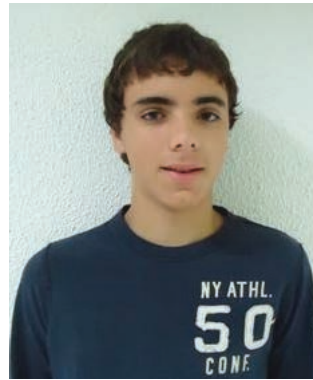
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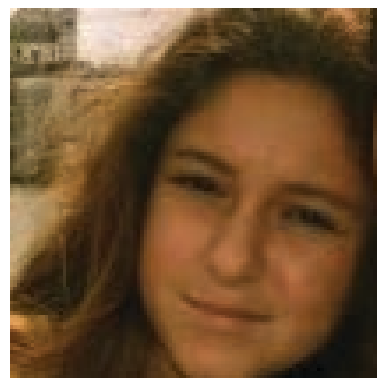
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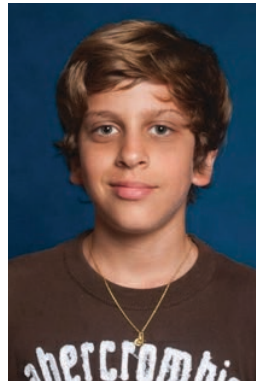
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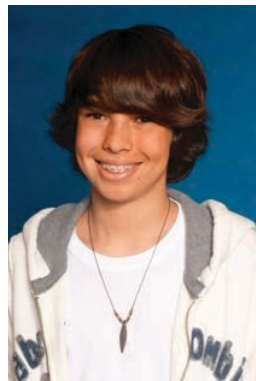
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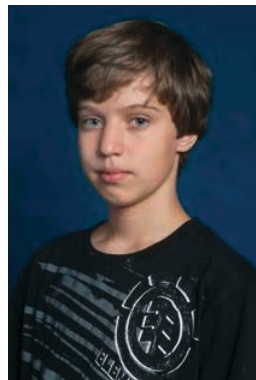
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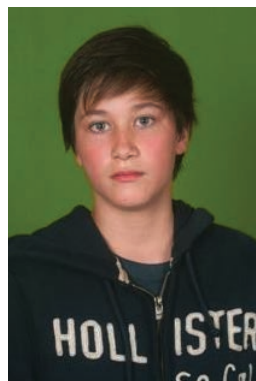
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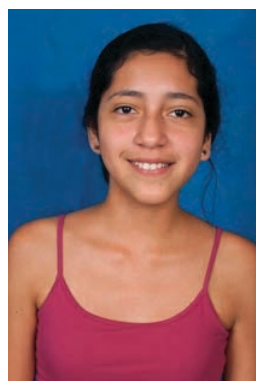
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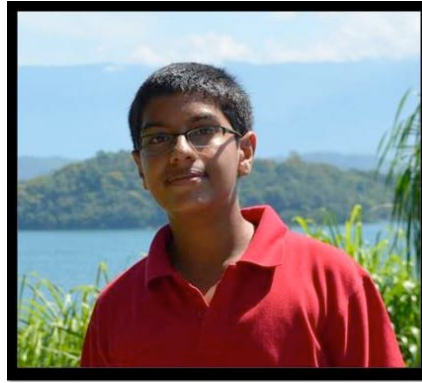
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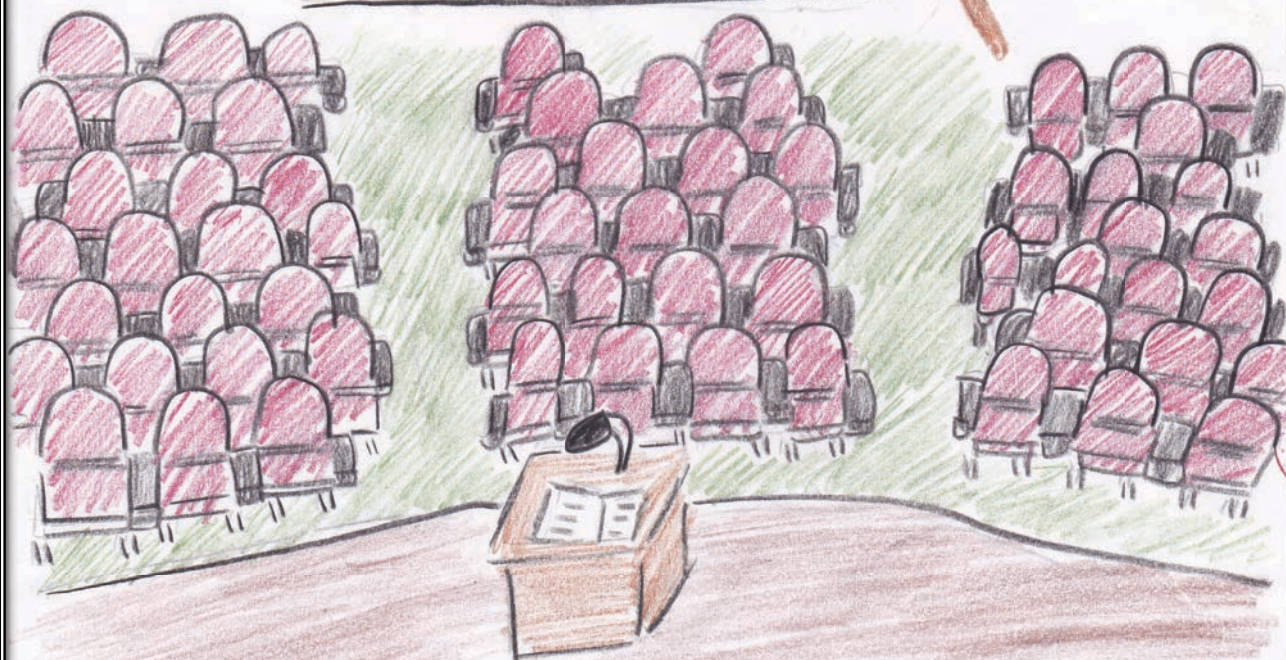
MASQUERADE



1.5



The untold stories



by: Class of 2016/Ryan Sagare. -Illustrator: Federico I

**“Bronx Masquerade 1.5:
The Untold Stories”
by The Class of 2016
Illustrations by Federico Ivanissevich**

Wesley “Bad Boy” Boone **by Nikki Grimes**

I ain't particular about doing homework, you understand. My teachers practically faint whenever I turn something in. Matter of fact, I probably got the longest list of excuses for missing homework of anyone alive. Except for my homey Tyrone. He tries to act like he's not even interested in school, like there's no point in studying hard, or dreaming about tomorrow, or bothering to graduate. He's got a reason. I keep on him about going to school, though, saying I need company. Besides, I tell him, if he drops out and gets a J.O.B., he won't have any time to work on his songs. That always gets him. Tyrone might convince everyone else that he's all through with dreaming, but I know he wants to be a big hip-hop star. He's just afraid he won't live long enough to do it. Me, I hardly ever think about checking out. I'm more worried about figuring what I want to do if I live.

Anyway, I haven't had to drag Tyrone off to school lately, or make excuses for not having my homework done, because I've been doing it. It's the Harlem Renaissance stuff that's got us both going.

We spent a month reading poetry from the Harlem Renaissance in our English class. Then Mr. Ward- that's our teacher- asked us to write an essay about it. Make sense to you? Me neither. I mean, what's the point of studying poetry and then writing essays? So I wrote a bunch of poems instead. They weren't too shabby, considering I'd only done a few rap pieces before. My favorite was about Langston Hughes. How was I to know Teach would ask me to read it out loud? But I did. Knees knocking like a skeleton on Halloween, embarrassment bleaching my black cheeks red, eyes stapled to the page in front of me but I did it, I read my poems.

Guess what. Nobody laughed. In fact, everybody thought it was cool. By the time I got back to my seat, other kids were shouting out: "Mr. Ward, I got a poem too. Can I bring it to read?"

Teach cocked his head to the side, like he was hearing something nobody else did.

"How many people here have poems they would like to share?" he asked. Three hands shot up. Mr. Ward rubbed his chin for a minute. "Okay," he said. "Bring them with you tomorrow."

After class Teach came over to my desk. "Great poem," said Mr. Ward, "but I still expect to see an essay from you. I'll give you another week." So much for creative expression.

Long Live Langston **by Wesley Boone**

Trumpeter of Lenox and 7th

Through Jesse B. Semple,

You simply celebrated

Blues and Be-bop

And being black before

It was considered hip.

You dipped into

The muddy waters

Of the Harlem River

And shouted "taste and see"

That we Black folk be good

At fanning hope

And stroking the fires

Of dreams deferred.

You made sure

The world heard about the beauty of

maple sugar children, and the

artfully tattooed backs of Black

sailors venturing out

to foreign places.

Your sweet flypaper of life
Led us past the Apollo and on
through 125th and all other
Harlem streets you knew like
the black of your hand
you were a pied-piper, brother man
with poetry as your flute.
It's my honor and pleasure to salute
You, a true Renaissance man
Of Harlem.

Tyrone Bittings
by Nikki Grimes

School ain't nothin' but a joke. My moms don't want to hear that, but if it weren't for Wesley and my other homeys, I wouldn't even be here, aight? These white folks talking 'bout some future, telling me I need to be planning for some future-like I got one! And Raynard agreeing, like he's smart enough to know. From what I hear, that boy can't hardly read! Anyway, it's them white folk that get me with this future mess. Like Steve, all hopped up and backed off a few steps. "All I'm saying is, you're a walking drama, man. You got that down pat, so maybe you should think about putting it on paper." When that boy dyed his hair, I b'lieve some of that bleach must've seeped right into his brain. I grind my teeth and lower my voice. "Boy, get out my face," I tell him. He finally gets the message and splits. I'm ticked off that he even got me thinking about such nonsense as Broadway.

White folk! Who they think they kidding? They might as well go blow smoke up somebody else's you-know-what, 'cause a Black man's got no chance in this country. I be lucky if I make it to twenty-one with all these fools running round with AK-47s. Here I am one of the few kids I know whose daddy didn't skip out on him, and he didn't even make it to thirty. He was doing okay 'til he got blown away on a Saturday. Blam! Another statistic in a long line of drive-bys. Life is cold. Future? What I got is right now, right here, spending time with my homeys. Wish there was some future to talk about. I could use me some future.

I'm just about ready to sleep off the whole year when this teacher starts talking about poetry. And he rattles off a poem written by a white guy named Dylan Thomas that sounds an awful lot like rap. Now, I know me some rap, and I start to thinking I should show Mr. Ward what rap is really all about. So I tell him I've got a poem I'd like to read. "Bring it on Friday," he says. "As a matter of fact, from now on, I'll leave time for poetry readings at the end of every month. We'll call them Open Mike Friday." Next thing I know, I'm digging my old rap poems out of my dresser drawer and bringing them to school. I'm thinking it can't hurt to share them, even if there's no chance I'll ever get to be a songwriter. After all, it's the one thing I could see myself doing if there really was a future. And I'm thinking that maybe there could be if wanted it bad enough. And all of a sudden, I realize I do.

Attendance
by Tyrone Bittings

We are all here,
Leslie and Bad Boy, Lupe and Raul,
Here, here and here.
Dear Mr. Ward
With his wards and wardettes.
Let's have a show of hands today.
Is Porscha here? Is Chloe here?
Where oh where Sheila?
It's me, Tyrone,

Up here all alone
 Rapping into a microphone
 'cause I've got something to say:
 MTV is here, Mir and
 morning space-walks are here,
 terrorism is here
 lurking at the bus stop.
 Can't hop on the subway
 Without thinkin' of Tokyo
 We all know poison gas
 Does not discriminate
 It's too late to worry
 About my innocence
 Since fear I here
 Why weekend visit
 To your local Mickey D's
 May be deadly?
 Why hasn't somebody
 censored death?
 Don't hold your breath waiting.
 Still you can chill and celebrate
 All that's great about life, like music
 And the tick-tick of time
 Which is equal parts yours and mine
 To make of the world what we will
 But first, say no to coke, and smoke.
 Say no to police brutality
 And causing fatality.
 Say no to race hate
 Don't underestimate
 The power of love.
 But most of all
 Take two poems
 And call me
 In the morning

Drake Jones
by Sjur Dyrkolbotn

Off to practice, again. Man, I don't get why Coach Tim makes me play for the football team, I can barely manage my own business, and that's before you consider grades, and school work. All since my parents died in that horrible car crash, I've had to take care of myself, and as you probably know, that's not easy without some money. That's why I started dealing two months ago. I barely make enough money to take care of myself. So I got enough on my plate. That's why I make that fool Sterling do my homework, but he rejects doing it, so I sometimes take care of him the hard way.

Once this kid named Tyrone came up to me, and told me I should write, and perform a poem in this nerdy class called 'Open Mike Friday'. I needed to change my schedule so I could quit math, so I joined. You know what would be the coolest thing ever? 'Open Bike Friday'. Man, I could digg that. But hey, now I got a class where I can chill, and now I can quit math.

I need that sleep in class cause I'm going out late tonight. I gotta deal to make. A guy only known as 'Lil Big Brotha' wants four pounds of the smoothest tastin' fullest snow known to man. Man, that's a lot of work, but I can smile all the way to the bank.

I was nervous the other day cause I was thinking that good smelling babe called Tanisha is knowing I'm up to something, so I confronted her the other day.

"Hey babe, what you doin' tommorrow?," I said.

"Hey Drake." She said, "Hmm, nothing actually."

"So, would you like to go to the movies tonight, then we crash in at my house?"

"Sure, pick me up at seven."

That night I managed to make her realize I ain't selling pot, snow, and that crap. Man, I'm just wishing I could have a normal life with fun, happiness, and family. But I guess that ain't how the situation is for all of us.

My Dreamy World by Drake Jones

My dreamy world

Where you ain't got to pop out your Deagle Eagle to get what you want

A place where the world wishes you the best,

Not your death

That would be a thousand times better

A place where people live in peace

Not fighting over some money

That's how I want it

But not how I'm gonna get it

The dreamy day that disappears

cannot be relived nor remade

The world is as cold as a winter

So turn on your ovens,

and make it as good as you can

Life is deep

but you still digg it

Tyrone

Drake is a strange guy, but he got a point with his poem. He scares me though, I don't want anything to do with him except 'Open Bike Friday' as he calls it. How come all the ladies digg him. Good luck girls! I really like the line, "A place where you ain't got to pull out your Desert Eagle to get what you want." It sounds like his life is reflected in this poem, cause three days ago, he got pulled in by the Doughnut Patrol for dealing cocaine, and marijuana. Man, even though we live in a tough part of town, that ain't the way to go.

Yong Li by Berend Kam

As I walk into the cafeteria, I can already feel several eyes staring at me. Sometimes I even wonder if it isn't my leg staring at them. Some quickly look to the side when I face them; others giggle or pretend they are throwing up. My eyes water and scream "Make it stop!" But I try to focus on lunch. Lucky for me they also focus on the hot and tasteless lasagna. I get my food and walk to a table with three teenage girls sitting on the other end of it. When I sit down they hasten to grab their stuff and leave. Of course the only five people willing to sit at my table are Johnny, Michael, Kevin (the seniors) and Tyrone and Wesley. Tyrone and Wesley usually don't bother me that much because they leave me alone, but the senior's just tick me off like flies irritating a cow.

"How's your leg doing today Mr. Pirate?" says Michael, the smartest one. Although he is the smartest he doesn't insult in the best way or should I say worst? I got Kevin to do that for me. "The worst western worthless piece of windy trash is sitting right next to me." He says with a tone that just ticks me off. I usually keep my temper but this time I can't control myself. I pop Kevin's nose open like a soda can. Then I get away as fast as possible.

After school I walk home. I wish I lived somewhere where everybody would respect each other, but that place doesn't exist. I should know. I've lived in almost every single country. I was born in a small town on the western border of China. My dad left two days after my birth because he was ashamed of me. The only thing my mom ever said about that was that it wasn't my fault. She's right. What can I do about the fact that I was born with only one leg? At the age of five we moved to the big city of Beijing. There were 1 billion more people living there compared to my old town. I was supposed to get my leg there, but the doctors said that only America or maybe Japan could do such thing. Also, they said it would be better for me to go to a "special school" so not to be bullied. Well, I am a lot of things but stupid. So I figured that I'd rather go to a regular school. At the age of seven we moved to Japan to get my leg there but they couldn't do anything either. Nobody could ever do anything. That's how I ended up here.

A cold drop falling out of the sky interrupts my thoughts. Soon after, many follow. For some reason I get a spooky feeling that somebody is following me. I turn around and I see a glimpse of Kevin's blue sweater behind a trashcan. I start to walk a bit faster but they catch up to me pretty fast. They drive me into a dark alley with a dead end and I pray for God or someone, but the only answer I get is the rumbling thunder.

Rain by Yong Li

As I stand in line it starts burning it starts itching.
Not because it hurts but because it looks at people.
The leg that nobody wanted.

An insult that tastes bitter or a comment that smells to me like millions of dead fish;
The fish that swim in the freezing water;
The freezing water in the lonely river;
The lonely river where I stood;
The lonely river that calls for me.

Pow! Kaboom!
Are the sounds their punches made.
He lay there in the cold rain.
Warm blood, streaming out of his head.
Iron tears running down his cheeks.
The boy that nobody wanted.

Only the lightning heard my cry.
Only the rain understood my pain.

Tyrone

Damn man! Iron Man got skills for a person who's not a brother. I gotta give him that! Who knew that the lonely guy in the back of the class could rhyme? His stuff was so deep it almost broke my soul! Maybe it's time for me to get to know him. I could use some advice for my next poem. Also, it seems like he could use a friend.

Mia Hudgens **by Juanita Ariza**

The mirror reflects a zombie, so I change my outfit into something cuter. It reflects a zombie in an appealing outfit. I finish getting ready, but it seems that even with copious amounts of make up nothing will hide the merciless hangover that attacks me. No one will see the dead expression hanging in my face with the famous Ray Bans I wear, so I add them.

I get down stairs, rush past my dad, and get to the motorcycle... But wait, where is my motorcycle? My baby's empty spot is depressing. I hear footsteps coming but I don't turn, the trauma keeps me silent.

"I thought you would like to sit down and talk about why you weren't at Tanisha's slumber party yesterday?" his aggressive voice gets to my ears as it mixes with the faint sound of a little girl playing in the street.

Dearest Daddy, who made me leave New York, who hurt me bad so many times since it happened, which has constantly brought different women home each day, the man who made my mother sick! I couldn't talk to him and have one of these pointless discussions, which made me sad again. Not again. I ignore him and just walk. It couldn't be worse than talking with a soulless person, a true zombie.

The screech of the bell was heard as far behind I was, and it was hurtful to my ears as if I were besides it. I get there and the traffic between classes is heavy. At school no one really cares anymore about the glasses, or me. My nickname is even Ray Bans.

"Hey Ray Bans! Had a hard night yesterday?"

It could only mean Wesley Boone. With his supposed to be "bad boys" little gang of jerks behind him, laughing like old crazy monkeys. As I come close they get serious, they know I'm the dangerous one.

"Why so serious guys? What happened, did I miss the joke?" I say with a malicious smile.

I march on through the hallway like if it were a parade, so everyone knows that Ray Bans is here. Even though I seem unaffected, as soon as I reach the bathroom, I give my last long breath to try to hold my tears. I look at myself crying in the mirror reflection with the toxic smell of a school bathroom. I remember when I got home and found my mom pouring her soul out in tears. Those were the moments when I knew she had drunk way too much. I asked constantly if she was sad again, she faked a smile and responded, "No!"

I can't stand this place! Why the Bronx? No one has even tried to talk to me yet, they just see right through me like there is a tag with my name and my story and people just follow it. I ran past the same group of jerks, get to the street, catch a cab and leave to the nearest bar possible.

I know I'm an alcoholic just like my mom. That's why I need to hide it from my dad, so he won't leave me like he left her. As I finish drinking up my problems, I walk back to school just in time for poetry class, which surprisingly is a class I enjoy. I admire and envy the ones who get up there and express their feelings and get applause about it. Everyone's done it, everyone but me.

That same night Marcus calls, saying he has a present for me. Marcus is a drug dealer, he gives me the best he has for a small amount of money. I don't use drugs mostly, but I need it today. I go to the club, and the smell of pure hard alcohol takes control, the hard music coordinated my body. As I have one drink, I become someone else, someone fearless.

The next day I wake up to footsteps pounding in my head.

"Hey dad, sorry about yesterday I just crashed at Tanisha's."

"You are calling at this time to tell me you slept at a friends? Mia go to school for God's sake, and don't ever call me again at this time."

I try to stand up and act normal, but I don't have an idea of what is going on. Everything is blurred and spinning around me. As the loud bell yells in my ears, I jump in despair. Suddenly, someone catches me and holds me tight; something I haven't felt in a very long time. I feel safe for 3 seconds or

so. I see Preacher smiling to me. Preacher isn't his name, it's Sterling, but ever since he started on his religious streak people started calling him Preacher.

"Hey," he says warmly towards me, " Can I talk to you for a minute? "

"Sure, why not?" he's wearing new shoes and I like them, go Preacher!

"My dad said he saw you leave with two guys this morning from a bar, do you want to talk about it?"

I had no idea what he is talking about... I try so hard to put it away but it slips, it comes with no warning a tear sliding down my cheek. I think he's going to laugh but instead he embraces me again, and it feels... Wonderful.

"I can't remember the last time I felt someone cared about me, my dad treats me like he treated my mom. We're alcoholics, my mom got depressed lost control and now she's in a comma like a vegetable, hidden in some hospital far away from my dad so it won't affect his career or ego. You know he brings a different woman home every week; all of them look like mom. My dad treats me like I have a contagious thing passing through generations, and maybe it is, and maybe I am worthless but I will keep on trying to never be like my dad."

Preacher told me to go to church on Sunday, I could've laughed, but I agreed instead. It seemed fair. Then, I go home and I do the only thing I can think of: write.

Divine Temptation by Mia Hudgens

As I walk alone,
In the dark deep forest,
I hear a voice pushing me,
Whispering in my head,
"Come closer, take a bite",
I see an apple at the top of a tree,
Its look's divine,
Red like the blood running through my veins,
The temptation talks louder than my conciseness.
I climb the tree,
As I'm going up, I bleed from the scratches all along.
I know what will happen,
I've seen this movie before, way too many times,
But I follow the script that was left behind.
I take a final step into the divine apple,
I slip and fall,
Everything pure, innocent, and good,
Rushes through my eyes one more time,
The only way is to keep on walking,
Hurt,
Lonely,
Cursed for life.

Tyrone Bittings

Wow! That sistah got feelings, talk about what's up! Well she was always a fine piece to me, all right! But now, I see her as something more, somehow more human. Good job Ray Bans.

Devon Hope **by Nikki Grimes**

Jump Shot. What kind of name is that? Not mine, but try telling that to the brothers in school. That's all they ever call me

You'd think it was written somewhere. Tall guys must be jocks. No. Make that tall people, 'cause Dionard's got the same problem. Everybody expects her to shoot hoops. The difference is she's got no talent in that direction. Ask me, she's got no business playing b-ball. That's my game.

I've got good height and good hands, and that's a fact, but what about the rest of me? Forget who I really am, who I really want to be. The law is being cool, be tough, play ball, and use books for weight training- not reading. Otherwise everybody gives you grief. Don't ask me why I care, especially when the grief is coming from a punk like Wesley Boone. Judging from the company he keeps he's a gangster in a sheep's clothing. I don't even know why he and Tyrone bother coming to school. Its clear they don't take it seriously, although maybe they're starting to. That's according to Sterling or Preacher, who believes in praying for everybody and giving him or her the benefit of the doubt. I love the preacher-man, but think he might be giving these brothers too much credit. Anyway, when I hang around school and any of the guys ask me, "Devon, where are you going?" I tell them I am going to the gym to meet the coach and work on the layup. Then once they're out the door, I cut upstairs to the library to sneak a read.

It's not much better at home. My older brother's always after me to hit the street with him, calls me a girly man for loving books and jazz.

Don't get me wrong. B-ball is all right. Girls like you for one thing. But its not you they like. It's Mr. Basketball. And if that's not who you are inside, then it's not you they're liking. So what's the point? Still I don't mind playing, just not all the time.

This year is looking better. My English teacher has got us studying the Harlem Renaissance, which means we have to read a lot of poetry. That suits me just fine, gives me a reason to drag around my beat up volumes of Langston Hughes and Claude McKay. Whenever anybody bugs me about it, all I have to say is "homework." Even so, I'd rather the brothers not catch me with my head in a book.

The other day, I duck into the library, snare a corner table, and hunker down 3000 Years of Black Poetry. Reynard sees me, but its not like he is going to tell anybody. He hardly speaks, and he never hangs with any of the brothers I know. So I breathe easy. I'm sure no one else has spotted me until a head pops up from behind the stacks. It's Janelle Battle from my English class. I freeze and wait for the snickers I'm used to. Wait for her to say something like, "Hey coach got you reading now? Afraid your going to flunk out and get kicked off the team?" But all she does is smile and wave. Like it's no big deal me being in the library reading. Like I got the right to be there if I want. Then she pads over, slips a copy of "The Panther and than Lash" on my table and walks away without saying a word. Its one of my favorite books, but how could she know? She must have seen me in the library more often then I thought.

Bronx Masquerade **by Devon Hope**

I woke up this morning
Exhausted from hiding
The me of me
So I stand here confiding
There is more to Devon
The jump shot and rim
I'm more then tall
And lengthy of limb
I dare you to peep
Behind these eyes

Discover the poet
In tough guy disguise
Don't call me jump shot
My name is surprise.

Tyrone

Shoot. If I had moves like Devon, I'd crisscross the court with Scotty pippin! That's probably what the brother is going to end up doing, anyway cause he ain't half the word man I am. Course I've probably been at it longer.

He might get better. I said MIGHT. And who knows? Muhammad Ali was a boxer and a poet. Maybe it's time for another hoop man to rise to the occasion and show Shaquille he ain't the only word-man on the court.

Lupe Algarin by Nikki Grimes

Janelle' got a thing for Devon, but she ain't the only. Last week I seen some girl named Beth in here staring like he was chocolate ice cream she could not wait to spoon up. She doesn't even belong to this class. Come to think of it a lot of extra kids been showing up in our class on Open Mike Friday. They heard about the poetry, and have been coming to check it out. A bunch of teachers are getting mad at Mr. Ward with all these kids missing classes. Everybody's talking about it.

Poor Mr. Ward. He sends students back were they belong - when he catches them. Our class is big though, so it's easy for someone to duck down at the end of the room and hide. Sometimes we are halfway through the period before he notices someone is in the wrong class. But he caught Beth last week, and I saw Janelle grinning. She doesn't have Devon yet, but she still wants him for herself. I know that feeling, when you love someone like that. And not just a guy.

I love my Rosa.

Rosa is so beautiful; I wish I could bring her to school. Mr. Ward would love her. Her toes are like tiny churros you want to nibble on all the time. And I do, whenever my big sister Christina has me over to baby sit. She smiles more than she did before she had Rosa. Or maybe she's just happy to be out of the house. I would be. There is nothing for me there, that's for sure.

My brother left long ago, and then Christina. So it's just me now, with Maim and her husband, Berto. Besides her actor job, all she cares about is him. As for Berto, he has no use for anybody's kid, not even Mami's.

Why does she put up with him? All he does is belch beer and scream at her to bring him and his buddies more while they sit around playing dominos or watching fights on TV.

"I bet Papi doesn't guzzle beer all the time," I often say to Mami.

"You don't know what he does Lupe," she always says. "How could you? You were only 5 when he left. And he left on his own, Lupe. Pero, what did I expect? He was a jíbaro through and through. He couldn't wait to get back to his precious mountains! And this is the man you love? But Berto, who puts food in your mouth, him you despise. ¡Dios mio!"

I hate it when she calls Papi a hick, the way she spits the word out.

I used to write him so many letters. But he never wrote back. Why, Papi? There's no one here to love me now. Mami has Berto, Tito has carnales on the streets, and Christina has Chooch and Rosa. And me? Raul's been giving me the eye lately, but he can forget it. He's too much in love with himself, always drawing pictures of his own face. What's that about? Besides I already got a man. My Marco. Except, Marco rarely has time for me, even though he promises me I'm his woman, his one and only. Sometimes I say my rosaries and beg for someone to love. I lay in bed under the crucifix and pray 'til my fingers go numb on the beads.

Lately when I look at Rosa, I think I should do like my friend Gloria Martinez. I should make baby of my own. Maybe that's the answer.

I like Marco good enough. I don't want to marry him, but he is cute. We'd make pretty babies together I think.

I've always loved babies. When I was younger I would wrap my doll in the lace from my first Communion, and I'd show her off to all my neighbors. "Mira, Mira," I'd say. "See my baby. Isn't she perfect?" And she loved me better than anybody, because I was her mother. It was only pretend, of course. But if I had a real baby, she would love me like that. The way Gloria's baby loves her. The way Rosa loves Christina.

I saw Gloria and her baby at the grocery last night. I waved to them and all the time, I'm thinking, Gloria, you have no idea how lucky you are.

Brown Hands by Lupe Algerian

You macho Soledad
the secret I whisper in the night
You fill your eyes with me
like a mirror
I see myself in.
Our twin hearts beat
like congas, the rhythm
churning our blood
to salsa.
Our brown hands intertwine
beneath moonshine
clasping all the love
we'll ever need—

Tyrone

So the daydreamer speaks. Every time I look at Lupe, she seems like she's somewhere else. Or maybe just wants to be. Maybe she's thinking about the guy in that poem. But if she is, how come she never smiles?

James Wong by Lucas Valim

There was a test in math today. That wasn't a surprise to me, the date was written in red letters and it was on the board all week. Still almost no one cared like a deer on a highway that doesn't notice the truck until, "BANG," it hits him. I studied all week and everyone expects that. It's probably just because I am Asian everyone thinks I am some sort of genius. Oh how I hate stereotypes. Still every one that sits close to me and tries to copy from my paper; they're not even discouraged if I sit in front of the teacher. Wesley is the first person to whisper to me.

"Hey Wong, what's the answer for number 42?" There is no plea in his voice; he says it as if it was a command and I had to attend to it.

I ignore him, as if he wasn't there. Later after class is over, he walks up to me and says, "Thanks for your help Wong." There's so much sarcasm in his voice I almost drown in it.

Good thing I am used to people like Wesley, people that always ask me questions. Sometimes I think I could be a teacher like Mr. Ward, but my dad would hate me forever if I did. He's always going on about me having the gift of knowledge and how I should use it well. My family has always worked hard, especially since my great-great-grandfather came to America. My mom worked so hard that she ended dying while giving birth to me. I respect that a lot, but dad uses it as just another reason for me to become something great and not a public school teacher. Even in school my life is like that, everyone sees me as a resource, as if my purpose in life was to make up for them not caring about school and

studying. I wish I could change all that. Hey guess what, I can. The rest of the day goes by normally, until I start heading home. Leon and his gang circle me, I am not really surprised.

"Where's my homework Jap?" Leon asks

Leon had given me his science homework yesterday and told me to do it. It must have slipped out of my mind. Now is the time for change. I think to myself. I look up proudly and say, "Sorry Leon, but I think it's about time you learned your ABC's by yourself."

I instantly regret trying to be witty, his friends hold me in place and Leon pulls his hand back ready for a punch. His fist is a plane, and its about to crash land on my face. I close my eyes and wait for the pain, for the metallic taste of blood in my mouth, for the salty tears to run down my face. Surprisingly, I feel nothing. I am thrown onto the ground, but someone helps me get up. My vision is blurry so it takes a while for me to notice who it is. It's Devon.

"You okay?" he asks

"I guess." I say as I nod uncertainly

I look around and find that the street is empty. Devon notices me looking and says, "They ran away when they saw me coming, lucky you. That punch could've caused some damage."

I smile uncertainly at that.

"Come on" he says as he starts to walk away

I follow and we talk all the way until we get to my house; it's mostly about school. Devon drifts off into the whole basketball thing, but he's surprised to discover that I know a lot about the sport. We eventually get to my house.

"See ya tomorrow James," Devon says as he walks away.

I go inside, and for some reason my dad doesn't get why I spent the rest of the day smiling.

Last Stand by James Wong

I believe in second chances
And last stands
A final face off
Against dread and fear
We make ourselves
Our lives are not recorded in stone
But smooth gold
For I am free
Like a bird
Only wingless
I am the puppet and the puppeteer
No man is chained to another
You don't have to follow someone else's road
You can just make your own.

Tyrone

Seems like a lot of people want to bring out their real personality. I always thought James would go crazy because of the way people are always setting their weight on his shoulders. Brave of him to stand up to it like that. I wonder who'll do like James and stand up next.

Petunia Penelope Yallani
by Luciana Isaksen

How could she! Just when Harry was starting to like and notice me she blows it. I thought she was my best friend, turns out I was mistaken.

Last week Lupe and I went out shopping and met Harry there. He asked us if we could help him choose a present for his mother because her birthday was coming up. So we went in, and Lupe saw a dress that she really liked, but it was too expensive for her. When we were leaving the store, I saw Lupe put the dress inside Harry's bag and the clothing sensor started beeping; the security came running and looked inside the bag and saw the dress. They took Harry away. I started to cry worried with what was going to happen to him. He took all the blame for something he didn't do, and I knew that Lupe would refuse to tell the security she did it.

I couldn't believe what she was putting me through. I had to make a choice between my best friend and the boy I love. If I told the cops that Lupe was the one who stole the dress, Lupe would never forgive me and if I didn't Harry would never look at me same way. I decided to tell on Lupe because I thought that was the right thing to do even though Lupe is my best friend.

What to Do
by Petunia Yallami

What Should I do?
And not hurt you?
Who should I trust?
Should I trust him?
Or should I trust you?

Should I keep quiet?
Or should I tell on you?
If I keep quiet
Maybe that will do
Maybe I should tell?
And see where it will end up
If I tell
It's for the right cause
If I don't
What shall it do?
Not hurt you?

Tyrone

Man, I have no idea of what that new girl was talking about. I just know she's in trouble because by the way she read it she sounded annoyed or sad I can't really figure it out. This is actually the first time I've heard that girl speak. She looks cool and from the sounds of her poem she sounds like a cool friend to have, I wonder if one day we could be friends.

Alissa Iriancho
by Lorena Nieuwenhoven

I concentrated only on putting one step in front of the other; the dreaded walk home was always very tiring. It also gave me plenty of time to think. I sometimes wish it didn't. I always end up thinking about my mom, more often now, after hearing about Leslie and Porcha's mom. They don't know what real loneliness is. At least they knew that their mom cared for them like a flower needs the spring or a pencil needs a paper. I don't have a mama; if I did, I would know she never loved me. My mama chose

to leave me, chose not to love me, but that was a long time ago. I'm over it. Plus, I have more worrying issues to think about now.

With a deep breath I enter my abandoned garden. The tangy sweet smell that comes from the house tells me it won't be a good evening. I picture John saying, "Alissa, it's okay. I won't let him get close to you. I swear!" with his 14 year-old courage. I'm 17 and am still trying to match that. I wish he wouldn't live with such terror. Apparently, our drunken father was in the mood for trouble. Trouble was always cruel and merciless in this house.

As my father bellowed, I took care to appear invisible while tip-toeing through the shattered glass and beer cans. I know I'm the one who is going to end up cleaning it all. There's a crunch, holy crap; that was a beer bottle I just stepped on, noisy and painful. My father's drunk, half conscious eyes pinned me to the wall.

"Dad, stop. I'll just go to my room. I promise."

John's eyes appear from the back of the small messy room, where he is safe. Obviously my dad doesn't listen to me and he approaches, moving closer. So close that I know I better move and fast. I feel the handle of the door and open it as a hard shove sends me flying. BAM. Uh-oh is my last thought before I go straight down to the ground in the street. That was one hard push my dad gave me. I might even be bleeding. I look around making sure no one saw that and my eyes pinpoint Tyrone. What the hell is he doing here?

His wide-eyed expression stare back and in no time is he by my side helping me up.

"Alissa? Whatcha doin' in the ground? 'Tis freezing outside!"

I know he knows exactly what's happening. One look at my house is all it takes. It looks like a cabin, one that has been maybe abandoned or broken down. It is livable, yet not somewhere you would want to live in.

He helps me up and suddenly I'm spilling my guts out to him. I tell him about my seemingly helpless situation at home and how I can be tough (actually I have to be tough, for John) at home, but not at school. Forget it, now he will probably think I am more of a crybaby like everyone in school does. My blond curls flow in the wind. It is cold, but I don't dare go back inside the house. I try to think of something else. Taking my mind off the present danger at hand, I somehow start thinking about what happened at school:

"Honey, that ain't a bad grade you cry about" a student consoles me.

In a more quiet whisper I reply, "I guess it could be worse."

My teary eyes could only look down, staring at the floor. Most people liked me; apparently I was "docile" or "kind". Yet I knew what they thought about me, "The little white chick that can't handle nothin." If they only knew. I felt judged every time I entered that school building. Oh how I bet they couldn't handle what I go through every single day. I remembered now how I couldn't raise my voice in my defense, like I constantly do to my father. Yet all too suddenly Tyrone's voice brings me back to reality.

"Hey, I know somewhere you could, um, crash, ya know? Seems like you need it."

I was bleeding, and really hurt as a matter of fact. Still, I tried to deny it, "No, I'm fine. Just please, forget you saw that."

"Ya know, livin' here you see a lot of these things. And I can tell when someone needs help."

I heard some more of my father's rage coming from the house. Some more screaming and then, there he was, John, with two backpacks hung over his shoulders; enough to carry nearly all of our belongings. John's eyes were shining with fear and the prospect of an adventure.

"I heard that you have somewhere to crash, right?" John asked excitedly.

Tyrone's smile told us this was the best choice. After some walking, we found ourselves in front of Lupe's house. Tyrone explained, "Lupe is always welcome to some people. Ya know she likes havin' company."

Those days in Lupe's house were very refreshing. It felt good to be out of my father's grasp. Free. It was nice to have Lupe to talk to. She helped me understand that if I wanted to express myself to

the class and show them I didn't deserve their harsh words, I had to tell them. I needed to tell the world my story in a way that they would understand, a way that could only be passed to them through a poem.

Heartbeat by Alissa Iriancho

A sunbeam shows
The start of any day
And if anyone knows
That can bring dread, love, or hate
Don't try to judge me
For you judge me unfairly
Do you take every heartbeat?
As a spark of hope, barely
Holding on?
An ending?
You never know
When it will be over though
Ended by drug overdose;
Don't judge me now
I ain't no punk,
Or a half conscious drunk
Don't judge me
For few people could hardly have it worse.

Tyrone

I knew from the moment I saw that girl on the ground, we had it all wrong. She got a thing with words. That was nice, baby, nice! Flowed, glowed... And no need of explaining 'cuz the poem pretty much said it all. Or maybe all the students already knew thanks to these gossipin' chicks in the school. Well, at least she got it all cleared up, some way or another. I know I feel good helpin'!

Josh Adams by Arthur Pons

It was a typical Saturday night; my crew and I could taste the bitter beer in our mouths and imagine the ladies. Not all of us had our radar on. How ironic, the ladies' man is not living up to his reputation! I'm talking about Kent Whitlock, the strongest, meanest stallion in the desert. His behavior actually was predictable; he was going through a very hard break-up with the hottest gal in town, Kaylee. That is one lucky jock!

There we were, at The Bomb, our local nightclub with the thundering beats in our rough ears, sipping intense drinks. It was perfect for hanging out or crying for lost loves. Then I take a glance at the corner of the room, on a couch there was a white blond guy getting hot with the warm, soft voluptuous body of... Wait, that's... I turned around and revealed, "Guys I think the one on the couch is Cody with Kaylee!" Starving with curiosity, they vigorously turned and confirmed. Kent's eyes were in flames, "That white blond kid is dead!"

The worse part is that Cody was Kent's best friend but I don't think he still is. He, more than anybody, knew how bad Kent had fallen for Kaylee. At least a swollen, bleeding black eye was inevitable, as Kent stamped the floor in rage. We all followed, trying to convince him otherwise, even though we knew that wouldn't change his hard head. By then, Kent's enormous shadow reached Cody's sparkling eyes, who finally realized the heap of trouble he was in.

Kent grabs his ex-best friend by his arm, making red finger marks and pulls him away from the frightened young lady, "Have you lost your mind, making out with my girl?"

"Dude, calm down! She's not yours anyway, by the way, it's a free country, and I can do whatever I want with my life!"

"So you think you can just steal anybody's girl and get away with it?" Kent quickly shouted, "WAKE UP from your perfect little dream of life!"

Suddenly I realized I had to be the repelling magnet. "SHUT UP both of you! You look like two lions fighting over a prey!" By the surprised look in everybody's face, I was on the right track. "You are best friends, you can't just fight over girls and destroy a life long friendship!" Man! Public speaking was really paying off.

"That betraying bastard took the love of my life," complained Kent.

"Get over it, man, she's GONE!" Cody must be out of his mind to say that.

"Cody, that was a bad move, but Kent, you ought to let Keylee free to live her life."

"I'm tired of you," Kent shouted, "Pick a side, Josh!"

Great... now I'm the enemy, for trying to help. "You know what? I don't care anymore; I'm tired of this nonsense! I'm out of here!" Now it was my turn to stamp the floor in rage.

Kent and Cody exchanged looks, and after a short awkward silence, Cody cooled down, "Sorry dude, I shouldn't have done what I did..." Kent's heart was softened, "No, man, I overreacted. It's true, it's your life, and you can do what ever you want. Kaylee and I are through. I knew that since I saw her with a random dude last week, she's worth nothing! Let's go get Josh." They walked out peacefully, mission accomplished!

What Now by Josh Adams

Best friends

Become cat and rat.

What for?

For the same cheese!

I, on the other hand,
am the wind that blows
any heavy dark cloud
getting in the way of the sun.
The sun is the most important element.
The planets are nothing
if there is no sun.
But it's only a cloud.
Why bother?
It's only a cloud!
It will pass like all the others.

Tyrone

I knew Josh was on the look out for friends anywhere, but damn! I had no idea it was that friendship was so important for the little fellow. But If I stop to think about it, makes sense. When there is a fight he is the one to jump in before someone is hurt. I'm glad we got his at your school to teach us some humanity.

Tiffany Hudson
by Maria Fernanda Pena Salazar

I wish I could move back to where I lived before. It was so much better there, and all this suffering just because of my dad's job. Why does he have to work as an engineer? The company he works for keeps moving him all the time, every 3 years approximately, so his family has to go with him. I hate moving. It's the worst thing on earth. This was the 5th time we've moved; dude I'm a teenager. I can't stand it anymore!

All my life I've had to keep silent, and not argue about moving. The only exception was when I was little, which doesn't count. Why can't we stay in one place like everybody else? Maybe I'm a little bit quiet and I don't like to talk about it, but maybe I just learned how to deal with it. I don't know. Sometimes I don't even understand myself.

It was the first day of school. I hate them. Everybody stares at you like if you came from another planet or something like that. I was late, as usual, which makes it even worse because everybody is already in the classroom. I wasn't able to make eye-contact with anyone except the teacher. I sat in the back seat because it was the only one free. Being in that classroom was like being a fish out of its tank. There was a girl sitting next to me, and we started to talk. Her name was Tanisha, and she was being a billion times nicer with me than anyone ever was. Everything was going great, but the problem started during lunch.

Tanisha and I were eating together at the table and all of a sudden a really hot guy came along. His name was Devon. He had lunch with us! Since that day, I always have lunch with my two closest friends: Tanisha and Devon. I actually started to like him a lot. I thought I could have a chance with him, but the problem was that I wasn't the only cat chasing that cute little mouse. There was another cat, Carla. The first time I saw her I was shocked. She's always wearing the beach braids with her male leather jacket. She looks like a boy and even more with her two buddies always walking behind her.

I always walk home by myself, so when I walk I'm vulnerable to any dangers. The sky was gray that day. I could smell the wet grass on my way, but that smell vanished when the black van came with the smell of gasoline. What was strange was that the van parked just in front of me. I looked around and there was nobody else. The first thing I saw were the black boots from the person getting off that van. I've seen those boots before in school. Those types of boots could only be from one person, Carla.

"Who do you think you are!" she yelled, "You think you can go around stealing others dreams, Uh?"

"Eh...what do you mean?" Of course I knew what she meant, but I was so scared; I couldn't think what I was going to say next.

"I mean...DEVON IS MINE! Don't you even dare to talk to him again or you'll see the consequences!" Carla pushed me and I fell onto the wet grass full of mud.

Gosh, there was no need to be so aggressive, but I decided to keep those words to myself because, if not, it could get even worse. At the end Carla didn't do anything to me, but I was sure she was going to, sooner or later.

I had been in school already for five months and everything was still the same. I was still friends with Devon and enemies with Carla, but that weekend it was going to change. We were having a class party. Tanisha and I decided to go together because we needed to get prepared for the party. I debated wearing my black dress with red roses or my jean dress, so I needed her opinion to choose one of them. The party started at 7pm and ended 12:30am. Tanisha gave me a ride to the party, and after too because I was going to sleepover at her house. The excitement was taking over me. I couldn't wait anymore!

The place of the party was huge! Tables were surrounding the room so that the middle could be the dance floor. On the ceiling it you could see a disco ball, which was spinning around very fast. At the end of the room there was a DJ. You could go and ask for a specific song and he'd play it for you, but after all the other song requests. On the tables you had different types of food like Mexican food, Arabic food, spicy food, sweets, and even sushi. The best food is the spicy kind because you can feel your

tongue burning, and even your throat sometimes. The decorations were awesome with lights of different colors. I loved it. Everybody in the class went including Carla, but she wore the same outfit she uses for school. Anyways, right after she came in, the DJ played a slow song.

“Can I have this dance?” Devon asked putting out his hand ready to receive mine.

“Yes, I’d love to.” It was the first time I held his hand. I felt like I was in heaven. I felt out of my body. For one moment I thought it was just a dream, but it wasn’t. It was true. I still remember that day like it was yesterday. We were face to face and...yes! After the party we were officially dating. It was the best day of my life, except for the end of the party.

Almost everybody was gone. Tanisha’s father was so late. I don’t even think he remembered he had to pick us up. Devon was there. He was waiting for me, but he wasn’t the only one. I had to go to bathroom, big mistake of mine! They were there, Carla and her buddies, waiting for me. I screamed as loud as I could but it was too late. My lip was bleeding and my eye turned red. I knew in a couple days it would turn black. But the thing that mattered most was that during my beating, my hero came along to rescue me.

“Stop, get away from her!” Carla and her buddies sprang up and ran away.

Devon walked to his car and he gave us a ride to Tanisha’s house. He was really nice by doing that, but I was still wondering if Carla and her buddies were going to leave me alone or not.

Learn How to Use Your Shell by Mia Hudson

We’re both the same,
No need to be ashamed.
If you think I have more colors outside,
Then paint yours and be done.
Why destroying my shell
Will help you paint yours as well?
I’m tired of everyone being so selfish
And so babyish
Not thinking that others
Worked hard to paint their colors
On their shells
Painting some bells
I’m done wasting my time
On stuff about selfishness
Because it’s useless

Tyrone

Well, seems we have another star in the sky. I can see why she wrote this poem. If I could, I would help her out, but definitely not with Carla. In 6th grade when I was playing soccer with her we lost. She said it was my fault and then punched me. Everybody hates her except for her followers, best of luck to Tiffany.

Joellinton Silveira by Lucas Vicentini

I’m Joellinton Silveira, with a double L after the E in Joellinton, but that doesn’t really matter. I’m a poor, Brazilian teen, from Rio de Janeiro, who is currently an illegal immigrant at the Bronx, New York. Taking a brief look at me you will notice I am 5’5 feet tall, fairly thin, afro-descendent, black power haired and intelligent.

When I first arrived at the US, I barely spoke English, and most of these American people didn’t treat me very well. It wasn’t only with me, this also happened with the Mexican folks, all because we are

illegal immigrant. These dudes should think twice before they have such an awful reaction about us, illicit immigrants. All we wish is a better future; we wish to live the American Dream. No other place in world gives you the chance of being whoever you want to like the United States of America. All my immigrant peers and I want are enhanced prospects

I began the school year being bullied by colleagues like Tyrone and Wesley. They used to beat me up and call me names, making life as miserable as it could ever get. . It's evident that the inauguration days at America weren't pleasurable at all... Before, I used to be a quiet boy, that had no friends except Devon, who was my friend because both of us had in common our passion for sports, Devon for basketball, me for soccer, but we got along pretty well. This despicable beginning made me have a drastic change in my way of being at school. I became the happy-go-lucky guy at school, and made lots of friends, gaining respect from my ex-bullies. On the first two months everything was going very well, with the highest grades on class and many enjoyable friends. Then, there was a sudden change in my life; I fell in love.

Lupe was the only person in our grade that used to hate me. She thought I was the class clown, and that real men should never be like that. She also thought I wasn't very attractive with my 5'5 feet and humungous black power hair. Probably, a dog would have a billion times more of a chance with her than me, but it didn't matter. Lupe is the type of woman, which every man dreams for; she is a princess! Her skin was as soft as silk, her hair brown and striking like the tree trunks of the Floresta da Tijuca. Her eyes looked like two bright coffee seeds, her voice went through my ears dancing like samba music, and the smell of her sensational perfume made my nose happy. She was also very loving and cute, like a newborn baby. As you may see, Lupe was perfect in any way you can imagine. I wanted that girl more than the water there is in the beaches of Rio. There came the day when I decided to show her all of my love and devotion.

As I expected she answered me with a big fat "NO." She blasted "You crazy Latino boy? I want real men in my life. Go search for someone your level, all right"

Since I wasn't very hopeful on lacing up her heart at first time I tried to, I didn't get awfully devastated. Instead, I built a strategy to have her in my arms. I started to become friend with Lupe's friends, and they started telling her that I was a nice guy, and not the inconsequential boy she thought. Next I stopped being that much of a comedian, and started being a little more serious. It worked, and Lupe was all mine. I was the happiest guy on Planet Earth.

We went out every evening, and kissed kisses that tasted like cherry. We made a perfectly loving couple. There came the day that after we went to a bar to celebrate our two month anniversary, Lupe and me took a step forward. It was the best night in my life and in hers too. Everything continued straight, but then one month later, which was actually last week, she told me she was pregnant, with a huge smile in her face. I always knew she wanted a baby, and someone to love, and at that point she had both. This couldn't be happening with me! Lupe was the perfect girl, but I didn't want such a strict compromise, like I was now tied to her forever, something sort of like a prisoner. This also affects my studies. I was willing to receive a scholarship for a first-class American University and become a successful lawyer. Only after of this chain of events I would think about kids and all that comes with the crying and pooping gift. I don't have the vaguest idea of what life is going to be like for me now. My life has fallen like a castle made of cards. I hope it's not, but I think it is the end of Joellinton Silveira's American dream.

The Future is Gone by Joellinton Silveira

You appeared in my life
When all I cared about, only was
Studying, studying, and studying
You made my life become
Loving, loving, and loving

You.
You gave me the gift,
You wished.
But it doesn't fit
In the future I expected a bit.

Tyrone

You know, I'm not like those people who melt down with a love story, but really, Lupe and Brazil dude's story could be a base of a love movie. I really wish all the best to them, and that they can solve this problem with the baby that's coming. Now I realized how I was a jerk by bullying Joellinton, he's such a cool dude.

Jonas Brown by Roberto Brietman

I hate these roaring streets. I don't care if the streets of my hometown look like they are crying; these streets make me cry! If you still don't know, I'm from the cold and wet streets of Seattle, and I miss my home so much I feel like I moved to Mars! My mom says I should forget this, but I can't make myself. I miss the snow filled roads of Washington. All I know is that I would trade the big apple for the space needle any day!

For some reason, thinking of this is making me tear up. I think Leslie saw me; she is bringing her tray over to my table.

"Hey Jonas," she said

"Hey" I responded, "what is the problem?"

"What is the problem with you, it seems like you were crying." Leslie admitted.

I was, but I would be crazy if I were about to admit it! "No" I blurted out weirdly.

"What is the problem with you, now I'm not the most popular person in class either, but it seems like you haven't talked to anyone."

"Well that's cause I'm different! I had lots of friends in Seattle, but when my parents and I moved to New York, my mom and I became completely isolated and lonely!"

"Well be glad you have a mom! I moved here after mine died, and I was also lonely when I arrived." She replied.

Confused, I asked. "So how do you have so many friend now?"

"Well I tried to make friends with people, talked to them like we are talking now! Open Mike Fridays also helped."

"Thanks I'll try it. I had heard of this Open Mike thing. I'll try writing something."

When I was walking back home after school, I used the umbrella as a cane. Sixteen years of sudden rains had taught me to always carry it. It touched the pavement with every other step, tap, tap at my side on the crazy streets of this dreary old town. The streets are louder here, but I feel a bit less lonely knowing that one of the voices in this uproar might be hers.

In the Rain by Jonas Brown

The rain, an ocean,
Falling from the sky
Its touch,
Always comforting to me

At home the rain is my blanket
And thunder my pillow
In it's embrace I am truly happy

But here in this monstrous place
Where all is sad and hopeless
I try to find a glimpse of home

And then I notice the rain,
Waterfalls here as it does there
It is H₂O falling
At 9.8 meters per second
No matter where.

And with this sweet water on my shoulder
I don't feel so lonely ... anymore.

Tyrone

That kid is crazy! The rain? How can you be comfortable in the rain with the water constantly hitting you, like it wants to kill you, or at least your hair! Or what about that annoying thunder when you try to sleep? Well, I hated him, but try saying that to Leslie, she clapped so hard her hand must hurt! Well all I know is that I think the kid gotta start livin a little you know, talk to people other than Leslie, and himself!

Chloe by Juanita Palacio

I swear if those girls look over here one more time, I'd die of embarrassment. They think that just 'cause my mom hit a few notes, I'm automatically a selfish, egomaniac.

Janelle came up behind me and whispered in my ear. "Don't pay attention to them. They 're just jealous."

"I doubt it." We talked making sure Porscha and Judianne didn't hear us.

My name is Chloe. Just Chloe. I don't tell people my last name, ever. I mean, people already think I'm an idiot who only thinks about herself. I guess it's fair to say I'm good looking with curly brown hair like my mom's and dark brown eyes like my dad's. Don't take it the wrong way though. I don't want to be like my mom. She's one of those singers that treats people like dirt, especially dark skinned people. She's my mom though and I got to love her. Everyone knows her and because I'm her daughter, I'm supposed to be the mean girl of the school. Anyways, that's not who I am. I used to be someone rude as hell. I changed though, for the better. The only people who really know me are Janelle and Tanisha. They're my girls. They get me, you know? I try not to care what people think of me. People just see a shallow girl who thinks she's famous. Being light-skinned doesn't help at all, either.

Suddenly Mr. Ward calling attendance interrupts my thoughts. "Chloe Springer?" I felt my head touch the cold, rough, chair I was sitting in; I sank so low in it. I sank so low I felt like I had dug a hole to China. Thirty faces turned to me and then came the gasps.

"Oh My God! It's Daphney Springer's daughter!"

"Who does she think she is?"

It's been that way for a long time now. I was tired of people criticizing me for what I'm not. I got up from my chair and stood in front of the class, ready to tell the class how I felt.

"Don't you guys get it? Yeah, sure, my mom is famous. So what? I used to be the selfish girl you guys believe I am, but people can change. Maybe you should get to know me before you judge me. You guys should know the feeling; when you're judged without people even knowing you."

In the back of the room I could hear Janelle and Tanisha clapping. Suddenly, everyone else started doing the same. The room was a stage. Porscha and Judianne stood up and walked towards me. "I guess we'll just have to hang out sometime then."

We all laughed. I couldn't help it. I looked over at Preacher, wondering what he thought about what I had said. He looked as in love as someone who got hit by cupid's arrows. I hoped that he was thinking about me.

Start All Over by Chloe Springer

From place to place,
It's always the same.
They tie the lace
To me and fame
Judging what I am not
Are they scared of being wrong in thought?
I hear their whispers; their snickers
While inside, the true me shimmers
I try to prove them wrong
That their world is where I belong
Inside I'm really just scared
A new chapter is what I desire
Through it all, I know people can change
I'll get rid of my fear; make it to real fame

Tyrone

No wonder she cares so much about what we think of her. I feel kind of bad, now that I know she ain't what she seems. I guess people can change. I gotta get to know that sista`.

Tasha Lee West by Dominique Ellis

I look at the clock, 1:17 PM. I started to get irritated. There I was, like I am everyday, sitting in Starbucks of Billos Mall waiting Caroline Parker as I always do after school. Even though Le Bronx is the closest mall from school, I don't like to meet Carol there because that's where all popular girls like me stay and I just don't want my friends to know that I even know Caroline.

While I'm waiting, nibble on the best cookie of all time. The smell of its chocolate filled the whole mall. I know the cookie will get me pimples, but that is what make up is for. It's the best invention ever. I would not live without it!

I look to the side and see Carol approaching. My watch says 1:21 PM.

"How could it take you 20 minutes to get from school to here, we are only 10 minutes away from school." I say.

"I know, but Mr. Leo...." Caroline tried to explain herself.

"I don't care." I interrupt her. "Today we've got double algebra homework."

"We have algebra homework?" Carol replies irritated.

"Sorry, I mean you." I reply trying to look evil. Caroline rolls her eyes. Gosh, how this girl can be irritating! "You have to do it all, or you know what'll happen." I say it trying to look the harshest possible. "Or the whole school shall know who put bees in Mr. Beto's car, and you know what the principal will do."

"Hey, but it was you, not me who did it!" she replies almost crying.

"Why does this matter to me? I can just blame it on you because, after all, people always believe in who has the better grades." I reply

"Tasha, this is starting to affects my grades! I don't have time to do my homework anymore, so I'm failing in half of my classes!" Caroline says angrily.

A bit of regret goes through me. Caroline has been doing my homework since I've started High

School. I give her my homework, tell her to have it done by tomorrow, and drive to meet my friends so we can have lunch. I start thinking about what I will do with my life. Next year I'm going to college and I still have no idea of what University I'll go. Caroline Parker has been saving my life for all these years, like a lifeguard rescuing a drowning swimmer, but next year this will be over.

Today I felt like she wasn't as scared as she usually is. She was nervous and almost crying like always, but something in her eyes told me she was not as scared. I have a feeling this is NOT good. She better not open her mouth and tell everything to the principal. That would ruin everything; she knows what I'd do to her if she did that.

In my English class, while watching Lupe perform in Open Mike Friday, I thought about how my shyness never allowed me to share one of my poems. Lupe's poem was really good but I would never tell her that, because she is not popular at all. My real BFF is Gloria, because after she had a baby she started having more popularity.

Gloria, Chankara, Diondra, Marlie, Juddiane and I are the gang. We are very good at making fun of people like Caroline and Tanisha. Tanisha is the best one to dis; she gets as red as a tomato when irritated.

Boys, we don't really make fun of them. Hanging out with some of them can make you popular. I have never had any serious relationship, because I've had this little crush on Tyrone since we were in kindergarten. I've been with other boys to forget him, but it doesn't seem to work. Plus, he never notices me. Oh, how I wish he did.

Last week during "Open Mike Fridays," Lupe was reading her poem; all students were as quiet as if she would give gold to the most attentive listeners. I don't know why, but I remember black dark clouds outside the window, and Mr. Ward in his special place in front of the class. Suddenly the secretary Pamela delivered a yellow paper to Mr. Ward's hands. Yellow paper coming from the office is always bad news and everyone knows that. He nodded at Pamela before she left, then comes walking towards me.

It looked like he was coming in slow motion. Is he trying to joke with me or something? I thought. I almost had a heart attack. Everything around him blurred, it was if the class disappeared. I couldn't even hear Lupe's poem anymore, I wondered if she's still reading it. That yellow note is just evil.

I knew what was in that evil piece of paper. That fool Caroline had opened her mouth. At one moment I thought, "Maybe it's just a slip for me to go home early, or maybe a congratulation note for maintaining 90% or above in all subjects." Who was I trying to fool though, I knew there was no reason for being optimistic; I knew what was written in that note.

It took an eternity for Mr. Ward to arrive. Shaking, I took the note; my heart left my body. The note said:

Tasha Lee West - Mr. Ward's class

*Tasha Lee West,
Come see me now, it's urgent!*

*Sincerely,
Ryan Lumbr*

10/18/11

Now I can say it: I'm lost. That was the worst moment of my life. How could she have opened her mouth? Caroline told everything to the Principal. She said I was black mailing her and that if she told him, I would blame her for putting bees in Mr.Beto's car. In 7th grade I got an "F" on a project and the next day there were bees in his car. I had a strong reason to do it, but she did not. I tried to explain myself but I knew it would take me nowhere. He was furious and I mean it, he was about to explode when he said:

"Don't expect to go out of this easy" as if I was expecting that. That's when a crooked smile appeared in his face.

"I'm going to be expelled, great my whole life is ruined right now," I thought.

"You will have the chance to graduate....," he said.

"Oh My Gosh! Ahhhhh!" I shouted enthusiastically interrupting. When I noticed I just screamed, I apologized and said for him to continue. That was just so involuntary!

"The only way to pass is if you study hard, because if you don't get straight A's in ALL subjects, you will repeat the year and be expelled from this school"

I literally froze; I could have the chance to graduate.

For the rest of the month I studied non-stop; I stayed after school everyday with a different teacher to keep my grades up. Now I have three goals to complete as soon as possible: number one, regain popularity, after everyone discovered what I did to Carol people stopped talking to me, even my 'friend' Gloria. I went from #1 in popular ranking list to like #1000000 or something. Two, keep my grade up for the last four months of school so I can graduate. Three, participate in my first Open Mike Friday, people say it's relieving and therapeutic; I'm nervous, but I think one day, I might give it a try.

One Hundred Percent by Tasha Lee West

I need to be perfect
In all possible ways
Be the best student possible
More intelligent than professionals
And have 100 in everything
My future depends on this
So do I
I feel like I don't serve for anything
I'm as lost as a baby in life
I think I won't be anything
And that's not fine
I have to be something in life
But I have no qualities
I have nothing nice
I acted wrong and I know it
I should not have done it
It was not worth it
I feel regret
And if I could go back in time
To make things all right
I would
Wow, if I knew a few words
Could change someone's life like mine
But now all I need
Is to be accepted
By school

And college
I just need
To be
Perfect

Tyrone

I guess Tasha and I have more things in common than I expected. I wonder what I will do in my life also, I feel like I'm useless and won't get anywhere. Tasha, you're not alone, and even though you did the wrong thing, you are aware of it and knowing you did something wrong and admitting it, is not something you see a lot.

Elisa Drummer by Nina Hamard

My name is Elisa Drummer, the famous Elisa Drummer! I live in Broadway, I eat in Broadway, I sleep in Broadway and I'm an icon on Broadway. I've been living through this adventurous life since I was 2 and now I'm sixteen. I don't want this life anymore. I've got no time to run over the clouds, or even hangout with my friends. Friends, uff, what am I talking about? I've got no friends; the only friends I've got are Tisha & Tasha my dogs. Here in Broadway it's like an amusement park, once you've been in this "fantasy" for too long, it feels like your drowning in Jell-O and it's hard to get out. That hasn't happened just to me, but to trillions of others. I've decided to move to Bronx, to get a break from this place where your heart melts from this admiration.

Here in Bronx, people aren't that open hearted except for maybe Lupe, Devon and Leslie. The school looks like a box and the smell is like a skunk. Other than that, my boyfriend, Devon, with his brown hair had to, obviously, be openhearted because then he wouldn't be my boyfriend. He reminds me of my ex-Zac Efron, but then there is the complete opposite, Steve. He makes my skin jump, it's like he's studying my mind every time he looks at me. It's good I wear these shades so that he won't penetrate my beautiful soul. I think he might know who I am, even after I changed my name to Jessica Patterson. Just looking at him reminds me of an ugly zombie.

"Hi Jessica" Steve stated with the crooked smile on his face.

"Hi Steve" I said thinking of what he was going to say next.

"You know, I think I should actually call you Elisa, Elisa Drummer."

"What?" I pretended not knowing what he was talking about.

"Elisa Drummer number one icon of this year, you don't need to pretend anymore I've already told everyone, and if you ask why, I did this just to get fame, after all who doesn't want FAME." He chuckled, "Plus the only reason Devon is your boyfriend is because he knows who you are."

"You've GOT TO BE KIDDING ME! I came here to start a new life and YOU HAD THE COURAGE TO RUIN IT!" I screamed out my lungs.

It was true. Every time I turn around people are staring, trying to quickly get a glimpse at me and they even try taking pictures of me! Why does this have to happen, just when I'm starting to have a normal life?

When I arrive to my sealed house, I sit down to eat the broccoli that tastes like rotten eggs and my stomach starts to flip. After dinner, I flew to my bed and cried an ocean of tears. Brrrrriiiiinggg I hear my phone, and took a look. It was Devon, so I answered.

"Hey" he said.

"Is it true?" I questioned.

"Is what true?" He took a while to respond.

"IS IT TRUE?" I knew he knew what I was talking about.

"No, of course it's...not. You know Steve is a big fat liar." He said slowly. I might have met him 6 weeks ago, but I knew he didn't know how to lie.

"IT IS! The only reason that I came here was to get a break from the life I had and start a new one, but you don't care. OF COURSE YOU DON'T!" I screamed so loud the neighbors probably heard me.

"Hey you can't judge, you've got the looks--" I cut him off.

"What did you just say?" I couldn't believe him. "You know you've got no future, no friends, no life, no other girl will ever like you." I hung up the phone and called Lupe.

"Lupe I can't afford another lie, tell me the truth?" I said.

"You know me girl; I would never do that to you. Come on Jessica you know who I am. All the fun moments we've had. You think that is a lie?"

"I knew you would never have done that. Thanks." I hang up and hit the hay. When I wake up, I realize today is Open Mike Friday's. I really need to release my feelings and I've never done a poem before, so I decide to share a poem. When I spot Devon behind me, I don't even bother looking at him. Tyrone and Wesley bug him that he's single now.

The Shadow by Elisa Drummer

This girl, the number one icon girl
Has baked her recipe of her life, straight ahead of her.
The painful moments and the limelight
She had decided to leave it all far behind.
Not everyone can have the treasure.
Some can find it, and mine was friendship something I never had.
The new life is what I had asked for,
But I have to resolve.
Some like to step and crumble the dreams of others.
But that won't allow it to let it all fly away.
The earth's weight has been on my shoulders for too long,
And now I feel free.
I just wanted a new life.
The Life I never had.

Tyrone

Man that fine girl been hiding in a crystal ball and has just been revealed. That was a deep poem. That's good she broke up with Devon. He doesn't deserve her; she deserves a man like me. I ain't gonna be with her just because of her looks, my momma taught me better. What she gonna do with her life now? Hope big Steve won't shatter it any further. I better give him a lesson.

Gorgio Burrelli by Raphael Affinito

I ain't too particular about school but my ma always said it would pay off in the future. As you can probably tell from my name, I am of an Italian background. Originally from Alaska, but after my dad split it was just my mom, and I, so we decided to move here to start a new life. That's not always a bad thing. Today's my first day of school so it's new people and new friends, but hey that's not always bad

I entered the classroom only be welcomed by a shuffle of chairs and silence. Only a few people in the in the classroom were staring me down like a hawks, but it still gave me the chills. Then from behind I heard a set of footsteps and Mr. Ward; he entered the classroom swiftly.

"Students, quiet please we have a new student here, what's your name son?" Shouted Mr. Ward, clearly stating my presence to the class.

"My name is Gorgio Burrelli, but you can just call me Gio for short." I answered in a conspicuous tone trying to get rid of all the attention, as if the weight of the world was upon me. Almost the whole

class was still eyeing me; I scanned the room looking at every person making a quick analysis of what they thought of me. Most of the girls had a very conspicuous look that said to me, "Hey I'm totally into you!" But it's just how you interpret it. As I looked more to the left many guys were staring at me in an intimidating way. "DING!" The bell rang. Once again a shuffle of chairs and the class cleared like a flock of birds.

"Yo, Gio you seem alright man the other guys were just messing with you. Oh, by the way I'm Devon." Devon explained to me as we trudged to the next class.

"Yeah, thanks man. Are all the classes as large as Mr. Ward's?" I asked Devon, as we rounded the corner.

"No man, it's just that his class has "Open Mike Friday" so you get to rap or say a poem. Some of them have been very deep man and many people get into it." Devon clarified. As we turned the corner there was a guy that I remember from class, he was one of the guys who obviously was not fond of me.

"Devon, What the heck are you doing with that fool. I thought the rest of us agreed about him!" Mike yelled at Devon in an extremely aggravated tone.

"Mike! Stay out of this man. I believe I have the choice of who I want to be friends with, besides I was just helping him out man." Devon protested to Mike. They came chest to chest; sweat beaded down Mike's forehead and a musky stench filled the air.

"Woh, come on guys we are all good friends" preached Tyrone in a calming tone splitting them up, "Come on Gio we got our next class together," Tyrone told me then we left. The two of them were still debating over what happened, when I turned the corner and saw her.

"Wow, man that chick is fine!" I said to Tyrone and he just smirked.

"Oh, hahaha yeah her name is Gloria, but she keeps to herself after what happened" Tyrone explained to me very nicely only to end in a sigh.

"Wait, what happened to her," I wonder asking myself what could have happened

"Well man, she has a kid now," Tyrone explained, as I gasped.

"Oh, well man I'm fine with that," I answered confidently.

"Hey bro, tonight there is a party at my house do you want a go, you can go for her there." Tyrone told me.

"Awesome man I'll be there!" I answered swiftly

Later that night, I am walking down a shady ally way and finally come across Tyrone's house. I entered the house to see most of the class partying. A strong sent of alcohol hung in the air.

"Yo, Gio sup man how are you doing? You like the party?" Tyrone asked excitedly.

"Yeah man it is tight. Have you seen Gloria?" I asked Tyrone.

"No I have not," Tyrone answered.

"Get, away from me creep." I heard a faint scream come from upstairs. I ran upstairs and found Mike on top of Gloria trying to kiss her. The sight of this filled me with the fury of a million sins. I ran into Mike knocking him off of Gloria. He stood up and walked right over to me.

"What are you doing here? Stay out of this punk!" he yelled at me. There was a strong sent of booze on his breath and gloom hung over the room.

"She said, no!" I yelled back to him. He pulled back his arm and nailed me with his fist knocking me off my feet.

This really aggravated me. I tackled him. Swinging punches were everywhere. Mike ran at me pushing us down the wooden staircase. I landed on my head many times. My sight become very fuzzy, a constant high pitch buzzing noise rang in my ear. I was able to distinguish Mike standing up. He spit and walked away trotting out of the house. Then all went to blackness...

When I wake up I see Gloria over me smiling." You blacked out and had quite a fall down the stairs. The scent and color of the house were different, bright and well kept.

"Thank you, but if you don't mind me asking, where am I?" I asked politely

"You're in my house," she answered. I looked around trying to build up the courage of what I was going to do next. I thought it over and finally came to a conclusion.

"I know this is sudden, but would you date me? " I said this staring into her eyes. A tear ran down her cheek and there was a moment of silence.

"Yes," Gloria whispered in my ear.

Mistakes by Gorgio Burrelli

It is not people that feed greed's belly
But rather, others mistakes,
We all do a few double takes.
When you lay down in bed ask yourself.
Why we are all here in the end.
It is our mistakes that put us where we are.
In all the world's lost desire.
An iridescent glow still hangs in the darkness.
It is a dying hope of an ending of a very greedy world.

Tyrone

Damn, well I was not expecting that. This guy just comes on the first day of school gets in a fight. Also gets the girl that a lot of guys were after. He is still a cool dude. His poem was not what I was expecting it was all about choices. It made me think about what I have done and how it affected my life. Well this is going to be a very interesting year; I believe we got some more new students coming in, so I'm sure Gio will not be the only cool one.

Rachel Smith by Luiza Valim

I've moved more times than I can count. My mother just tells me to move along. My father has been locked up for years for armed robbery. Everyone hates me and I'm a failure. The worst part is that I've moved more than ten times, but no matter where I go I'm always a weirdo. I am a turtle trying to catch up with the other animals, always being left behind.

There's only one thing I don't absolutely suck at: Math. I think I'm better than Janelle, and she's a brain! Today in class, she couldn't understand a problem, so I kindly asked her: "Do you need help?" She looked at me in the eye, just a quick look, turned away and ignored me, completely ignored me!

Raynard is really smart as well, but he's special. On Friday, he played his saxophone on Open Mike Friday, such beautiful sound coming out of his instrument. For a moment, the melody took me over; the pure and dancing sound touched me. I love music, always have, always will.

I think there's only one person in this place that actually understands my situation. Steve says he just moved here from the Big Apple. He says he knows the anticipation and fear that comes when you're standing in front of your new school for the first time. The sight of an old and large building, with banners and lockers everywhere, kids talk to each other as if they've known each other forever. You see the jocks, the nerds and the band talking to each other, everyone always in very closed groups, you feel your heart racing inside you, and you see the other new kids, scared and alone.

Last night, my mother came home drunk as usual, her breath smelling like a mixture of beer and vodka, her arms and legs shaking like they always do when she drinks too much. I told her that the next time she gets fired from her job for drinking or skipping work and decides to move, I'm not going with her. I don't know what I'll do, but I've been called ambitious in the past, and that must mean something. I told her exactly how I felt.

"I hate it here. I hated Detroit and Chicago was even worse!" I said.

At first she just laughed at me and said, "Stupid girl, you don't know anything! You don't get anything, so shut up!" I then told her that instead of drinking all day, she should actually start working.

She simply lost it. She started screaming at me very loudly, her words stinging me inside, and it ended in a huge fight, which ended with me crying in my room and my mother going out for a drink downtown.

Suddenly, the phone rang. It was Steven. He said he and Sheila were going to the movies on Friday and invited me to go with them. I accepted and when I hung up, I felt happier than I had in a long time. For the first time, someone actually wanted to be my friend. It was then that I remembered about Open Mike Friday. I'll write a really good poem, show them all what Rachel Smith can do.

Hope by Rachel Smith

I've always felt like the air we breathe
Never stopping, always moving
I've stepped in so many different schools,
Felt the warm paper that just came out of the printer,
Its warmth against my skin,
But I never stay long enough to touch the paper after it cools down.

There's a word that goes with you everywhere
A companion that often goes unnoticed,
But it's there and you can see it
If you don't quit
'Cause you can always cope
If you have hope

Tyrone

I can't imagine moving around millions of times like that girl. She's gone through a lot that I know. I almost admire her for still having hope.

Rose Gracier by Gwen Herd

If I get my dance routine wrong one more time I'm going to flip out! Tyrone makes fun of me for always dancing. I do it wherever: in the halls, in the cafeteria, in the bathroom, everywhere. Not a lot of people understand me; Tanisha is the only one who does. That's why we're best friends. We have a lot in common; such as we both have skin colored like caramel, so we try to stick together. She's not my only friend though; she's just my closest. Actually, I have a lot of friends, but none of them understand me like Tanisha does.

I'm tall, almost taller than Diondra, but unlike her I like being tall. I like my body. I have light brown skin, and brown eyes. I've heard some girls say I'm pretty, but I don't know, since no boy has ever told me I'm pretty. I've never had a boyfriend either or had a boy tell me he likes me. I used to like Tyrone but why should I, he probably wouldn't like me back, he's constantly teasing me. People tell me he likes me but I don't know if I believe that.

All I can think about are the dance tryouts that are coming up. This girl in my grade, Priscilla, is also trying out for the same part I want, she is so mean to me in school. She treats me like she is a million times better than me. She tells me I'm not going to get the main part. Well, I'm going to prove her wrong.

I am sociable, but I'm picky, so I pick my friends carefully because I don't want them to judge me. I want friends who can accept me for who I am. I've heard people call me "courageous Rose" because they say I'm not afraid to do anything.

Tryouts are tomorrow.

"Tanisha this might possibly be the best day ever!" I screamed to Tanisha on the phone.

"I'm so happy you got the part you wanted!" Tanisha screamed back.

"Ahh... Guess what Priscilla said."

"What?" Tanisha asked.

"She said she's going to make my life miserable, hah I don't think so." I replied.

"Hah wow, I have to come over to see your routine!" Tanisha said.

"Yes come now and see my dance routine!"

"Ok, I'll be there soon, bye."

Later that day Tanisha came over and this is all I remembered:

"Oh my god, Rose are you ok?" Tanisha asked.

"I don't know my ankle kills, help me!" I cried

"I think you sprained your ankle Rose", Tanisha said while examining my ankle.

"This can't be happening, one second I'm just doing my routine, and now I'm on the floor and can't walk! I could cry like a baby right now."

There is only a month until recital and I can still barely walk, it's horrible.

3 weeks until recital.

Now I can almost walk perfectly I just have a little trouble keeping balance.

2 weeks until recital.

I'm all better now and practicing like crazy because the recital is not far away. Now I'm really nervous, what if I mess up in front of everyone! I keep saying, "stay positive Rose, you are going to do perfect."

Recital

I guess perfect is a great way to describe how I did, according to Tanisha and my parents. Priscilla, on the other hand, didn't think so. She told everyone I did horribly and some people believed her except for Tanisha of course, and Tyrone. I don't know why he didn't believe her; he always makes fun of me for dancing, but whatever. I decided not to care what other people think; I just care what I think.

Thanks to Tanisha, who filmed me dancing people saw I did a good job, and they all got mad at Priscilla for lying, hah. Everything is finally back to normal and I'm happy to say my life is almost perfect.

Bright Lights by Rose Gracier

As the bright lights
Shine down on me
I feel a hundred pairs of eyes
Piercing me like lasers
The silence is deafening
And then the music rises
Here I am
Center stage all alone
Show time!
At first it feels forced
And awkward but then the
Music leads me and the moves
Come naturally this is
Pure joy!

Tyrone

I think Rose is a fine sista, but all she does is dance, she don't have time for nothing! I know she feel different because the color of her skin, but I'm down with it. She sure can dance though, but she don't know I know it. I saw the way she danced up there on stage; she a natural, she got rhythm too.

She sure can make a poem sound like a flowing river. Them words all joined together soundin' real good.

Andrew Plyworth by Andre Pittela

"Meet the new boss, same as the old boss."

"It's only teenage wasteland."

"That deaf, dumb and blind kid sure plays a mean pinball."

Unfortunately, 'my generation' will sadly never know the origin of these long-forgetting phrases that continue to be remembered by those who know taste. It makes me sick, those others and their two-layered tracks. Seriously, how does any considerably sane person find rhythm in that? I'm not trying to cause a big sensation, but my shameful classmates need to have some sense knocked into them-with a Les Paul.

Walking in, I feel the class' eyes glance at me as I finger the chords to 'Kashmir'. They would be laughing already if I had to explain my motives to them: I L-O-V-E R-O-C-K A-N-D R-O-L-L! So put another dime in the jukebox, baby. As I take my seat in Mr. Ward's classroom, I take no notice of whom he sits behind me. Looking at the clock, I see that Mr. Ward should be coming in at any moment.

Feeling a sharp thump on the back of my neck, I whirl around only to see the local jerk, Max, grinning a smug grin.

"What the bloody hell is your problem?" I sputter.

"Hmm, let me think...that would be you!" he retorted sharply. I deliver a quick slap to the face just in time to be scolded by Mr. Ward. I turn around, grumbling, and pay as little attention to Max as possible for the rest of the class.

Later the same day, during lunch as I'm neutrally standing in line with my hands in my pockets, I gander around at the daily reunions of friends as they walk together to their respective tables. While doing so, I can feel millions of judgmental eyes match my gaze. They peer into my soul, mocking my every thought. Get out of my head, I think, and the gawking eyeballs quickly fade into oblivion. I proceed to get my daily ham and cheese sandwich with some juice and I make my way to the table in which my companions Liam, Gabriel, Nathaniel and Mathias are seated.

Just as I comfort myself to some school lunch, I see out of the corner of my eye Max standing lonely in the lunch line.

"Hey Tweedle-Dum!" I call, hoping to pop a nerve in the ignorant buffoon's brain. Max catches my greeting, and angrily makes his way over to my table.

"Listen, hippie," he states, leaning on the table, "if you're looking for some serious butt-kickin', you better steer clear of me. You got that, pal?"

"Why don't you pick on someone with less brains than you for once?" I retort, my friends laughing along. Max grumbles, and stalks away, quite enraged.

The Crusader by Andrew Plyworth

Here I come,
Flag, fists, and all
Flailing my weapons,
Screaming the battle cry
My sole objective is to change your mind

To change your views on all thing imaginable
I am the Crusader,
Raiding your villages,
Converting your people to my race
The race of purebreds,
The race of the strong
The race of those who
Cannot stand the stubborn,
Of who cannot stand the ignorant.
All I ask is that you follow my ways.

Tyrone

Hey, it looks like ol' Hippy here got his own initiative going on! Goin' all takin' a stand and what not. He's a brave brother that Andrew, even though he's against me and my hip-hop beats for some reason. Sorta makes me want to look into his flavor, the '60s and '70s rock and all that.

And that Max! How about him? Thinking he's cool like that, going around and abusing brothers! Andrew's got some guts sticking up against this dirtbag. I would love to dish the dirt to downgrade that fool, but he's got nothin' against me.

Michael Hudson by Pedro Schweizer

"Hey Mike!" Shouted Wesley from the other far, dark side of the cafeteria. I instantly turned around, attempting to pretend I hadn't heard it. He came closer and poked me firmly with his food tray in the other hand. I shivered. "Mikeroophone, I'm talking to you! Man, you look weak... here, eat something. Maybe you'll feel better." He dumped his food-filled tray on my head and left with his gang, a pack of hyenas that had just brutally attacked their innocent prey.

My hair didn't enjoy the mashed potatoes; it became gray, mushy, rancid, and smelled like rotten garbage. The soup incinerating my eyes and my tears weren't helping either. Why does Wesley hate me so much? Am I that inconvenient and infuriating?

My name is Michael Hudson, but numerous people call me "Mikeroophone", because of my gigantic head and because I'm undoubtedly the school gossip. It's not my fault, I just can't help it. I smell the sweet, reinvigorating smell of gossip and I go maniacal. Whispers and insults are endearing music to my ears, except when they are about me, of course. Oh, and the shocked face of people when they hear a secret, the warm glance they give me is divine. I was the first to perceive that Gloria was pregnant and that Steve was going to move. I envision myself as a source of information for anyone, like the school's newspaper.

But, if there's one thing I love more than gossiping, it's acting. I can be anyone, anywhere, at anytime. I can be who I want without being judged. Actually, I'm judged all the time because of my height. I know I'm 4 feet 8 but I am savagely fierce (I love this word). And ignorant people like Wesley Boone just don't get that. Every time I see him I instantaneously turn around and run. I know he only bullies me to astonish his associates, he is sensible in the inside; on the outside he merely wears a mask. I know I'm right because I'm acquainted with all his secrets. My mom is his mom's unsurpassed comrade, and she told me Wesley's passion is singing! I was definitely flabbergasted but she begged me not to tell anyone and I promised her I wouldn't.

Anyways, I finished cleaning myself up and wiped the tears out of my face. I looked at the mirror and I couldn't even see myself. Oh, why do I have to be so short? I took a deep breath, left the bathroom, and I saw him, Wesley Boone. I panic. Only his sight gives me goose bumps. Too late. He threw the slushy he had in hand at me with a smirk on his face. My brain froze. My blood boiled. That was it, I couldn't take it anymore. Wesley Boone had gone too far! And I knew just how to get my revenge...

Masks **by Michael Hudson**

My mask is exceptionally wonderful
It makes me anyone, at anytime, anywhere
It doesn't have to fit me perfectly
Because, on stage, being dissimilar is okay
Then, I notice you in the audience
You have a mask too
But it is invisible
And yet despicable
You seem miserable
As if someone had flushed all your hopes down the toilet
And I surely know why
It's because you have been eaten by the mask
You couldn't handle your task
The real you was left behind
The mask became you
You became it
All because you desperately desired to fit
But then there is a shy voice
Pleading to come out
Hopefully, it smiles at me
It uses all its forces
The mask it distorts
I hear a shout
Freedom!
Life is better
Life is neater
Congratulations
Finally, your mask has fallen

Tyrone

Wesley's mouth dropped. His eyes became wet and he ran out of the classroom. I was having a hard time not to cackle. I just couldn't believe my ears. Petite Mr. Mikerophone writing poems! I thought that all he did was gossip, gossip, and gossip but now I know that he isn't as malevolent as I thought. Additionally, he is accurate about everything he said, including Wesley. He wants to be a bad boy but he truly is a scared little child. Everyone in the classroom seems confused. I stand up, applaud, and they all do the same. These poems are making everyone know each other better. Mike is right. The masks are falling... everyone's is.

Alex Bento **by Namanh Kapur**

Step by step, that's all I could think of or actually wanted myself to think of. I didn't want to imagine the dramatic and horrifying scenes that will probably occur in the living room of my house, the dreadful noises and the silent pain that will eventually creep up my empty soul. Instead I looked at the ground and watched my skateboard Nike's gleam in the moonlight, bringing back the very few memories of when I actually had a real family. I sniffed the humid air, one that was filled with the new smells of the fresh green grass and the great oak and pine trees. It was like a dream where you could see everything in detail, from the silent ripples in the water to the restless noises of the wind. The oversized shoes continued to hop down the pathway that led to what will become hell yet again. It was as if the shadows were staring at me and the moonlight was laughing hysterically. The clouds that hugged the moon drifted away, leaving behind the moonlight and an awkward sensation running up my spine. I picked up my hand like you would do for a puppet; it weighed weighing twice as much as it actually should have. Time froze, as my hand finally hit the doorbell.

The house started shaking and screaming "Ding, Dong." I however think, it was my body shaking, and the only thing the house ever did was pass the message that an unwanted guest had arrived. The smell of hatred was in the air, and I kept having the feeling that someone was behind me with their thick breath gently dropping on my neck. Nobody came so I silently opened the door and tiptoed to my room, or what the orphanage considered it to be. It was our shabby attic in which I slept; rats hole is what I called it. Of course my family, the orphanage caretakers didn't really care for my choice as long as I approved of their abuse. They were grumpy people that looked like they lived in mud and never brushed. They had stale brown teeth and sweat dripping on their foreheads, the smell they cast was like one that came from toxic chemical waste. I never did actually approve, but there was nothing I could do to stop them and they warned me that if I ever called the police they would kill me, literally. Anyway if I did call the police there wouldn't be any traces of their inhumane actions, as they did it so discreetly and I would be left without shelter, food, or protection exactly like a stray dog. I crept up the stairs and entered my room, my plan was all set, I just had to follow it. I quickly grabbed my knapsack and shoved all clothes in it. I took a deep breath in and gave a final glimpse at my life, my past, and the room I have been living in for more than half my life (everything that was significant to me). The 10 years of depression after my parents left me and went to the beloved one.

The memories shot me to the floor, the funerals and the tears, everything was becoming blurry and I was feeling dizzy. It felt like my heart broke into tiny pieces with sharp jagged edges that even powerful glue couldn't repair. Reality swept me back on my feet as I shook myself trying to break away from the trance. I closed my eyes and then the door and slowly the knapsack. The old stairs creaked under my feet, but I kept calm and eventually made it outside. Alarmed, I heard some footsteps but fortunately they were going away not coming towards me. I closed the door, and stepped out waiting for the feeling of happiness and freedom. Nothing came instead I was confused and had no idea where I was going and what exactly I was going to do. I just kept on walking until I ended up in the park. As the clock ticked 4:12, I threw my bag on the floor and jumped in the fountain. I was crazy, I was free, I splashed cold water everywhere and screamed until I couldn't scream any more. The ice cold water froze my body sending signals up my rock solid back. I was fully wet, dirty, and lonely but I was free and that was all that mattered. Shivering, full of goose bumps I got up and started for the main road, hopefully leading somewhere promising.

At the end of this mystifying road I saw a large compound that had a strange but welcoming aura to it, one that I needed urgently, the feeling of love and joy. I entered the closed premises and put down my belongings. There was no one there except me and my conscience so I took it easy and crashed on the floor. Life moved on from there onwards and has become nowadays reality, you can say I

was lucky or you can say I wasn't but things did end up just the way they should have. Me being here could be seen as an invisible scholarship awarded to me, and from that day on I have...

"Okay guys your first draft time is over, make sure you have just put in all your thoughts and written as much as you possibly can," Mr. Ward's voice echoed in the room. Children from other classes had probably heard his voice and silently crept up behind the last desks and sat down. They were all getting ready for the Open Mike show put on every Friday. However today Mr. Ward had changed the schedule and told us to present our drafts first and then our poems. I guess luck wasn't on my side today because Mr. Ward happened to call me up first and I hated speaking in front of audiences. As I walked down the aisle I heard faint whispers, but ignored them and this time I was ready to tell people who I really was. Mr. Ward dimmed the lights and turned on the one directly above where I was standing. The stage was all mine. I scanned the audience and saw their piercing eyes all looking at me, it was odd because at this moment I should have run off the stage crying but instead all the pressure didn't bother me at all today. I politely requested Mr. Ward, "Instead of reading my rough draft, can I read my poem? I think it will help you understand my point better." He looked at me with a confused look but finally nodded and gave me slight smile. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath; slowly took out a crumpled piece of paper full of writing and read out the title. "Peeling of a Façade", from then on a new chapter in my life had begun.

Peeling of a Façade by Alex Bento

I got nowhere to run and hide, nowhere to go,
Yeah abuse me; I'm Pinocchio, a free show,
I got no God like family, that's right, nobody,
Sista' no sweet samba music or melody,
To believe; give me hope, to just encourage me,
Try to understand me, I'm locked in prison; let me be free,
All I ever asked for were 5-6 friends,
Yeah, like you guy's friends are nowadays' fashion trends,
That's what I prayed for all day long,
Some group or a guild, in which I actually belong,
I feel like dyin'; feeling nothin',
Shutting the door ending the lovin',
Dear God, its Alex, please finish me,
I'm everything I never wanted to be,
Just stab me right in the heart,
No need for super skills, martial arts,
I'm leaving my soul, going to heaven,
Paradise like seven eleven,
I want to leave my damn costume,
Let go of all that scent, all that fake perfume,
Take off that old, rotten, cracked up, mask,
Your final stance, your final task,
It doesn't help, be proud of what ya are,
There's thousands out there who want to be that shining star,
That person with the fancy sports car,
With no problems, not a single scar,
Look in my deep and hypnotizing eyes,
Give me your promised advice,
Go back to where you belong, Ciao or Anyung,
Your story's over, I can hear the gong,

Don't forget your inner soul and core,
It's you, something new like never before,
You're so lucky, so don't make a fuss,
Don't always argue and discuss,
Step in other people's shoes,
Look at their lives and compare, doesn't matter whose,
You got yo bros and yo mammas,
And yo papas, so stop this drama,
Get out of that damn coma,
Stop making everything a goddamn trauma,
Look in the mirror, at yourself and look at what yo got,
Stop acting like something yo not,
Everyone's got two sides so stop mocking the other,
Act mature, be the big sister or brother,
Consider life and enjoy it to the fullest,
Don't go for the price; don't always look for the cheapest,
Say what you want to; make sure to speak it,
Say sorry and admit it,
You might die like my parents,
Taking the stairway to heaven, god's client,
You might regret not saying later on,
Time gone that's escaped, won't come back, it's just gone,
Remember these wise words,
All you people, gangsta's and nerds,
Don't hurt or harm other people,
They're your own brothers and sisters,
People want to be loved, have that sensation,
Without double thought or hesitation,
Stop the racism, sexism, and stop the bullying,
Stop accusing, and start understanding,
Be brave; be that new guy that takes risks,
Have fun put on the different disks,
Listen to the music, let it inspire you,
Don't show anger, don't be blue,
Count to ten, and let your frustration flow,
The whistle blew itself a long time ago, Ready Set Go,
Fly like a bird and express yourself,
You're you so stop being someone else,
Throw away that used mask and the costume,
Stop using make up and perfume,
And for once be who you truly are.

Tyrone

Man, has that brother got some skill in the area of speech. That homey blew my socks off with all that movement in his poem, he got some 3-pointer stuff in that letter of his. Man ain't Mister Ward gonna like present that to Mister. President of the United States and all that stuff, cause I sure would. That brother was one of the most confident people I seen all year, you getting' to where I'm at. I always thought that sissy was one big burden, but now that I really look inside, I guess I feel what he tries to show us. Next time he presents I sure will clap, 'cause that man deserve it, you understandin'. I started to notice that my sister Tanisha already got her two darn eyes on brother Alex. That's cool as long as

they stay “friends,” and only friends. Of course my homey didn’t notice and left but I will sure start helpin’ him get a little famous in my neighborhood, but not too famous cause the top rank’s already taken, by me.

Anne Jhonson by Sophia Simon

Okay. Monumentous surprise I know, you must be wondering what I am doing in this classroom full of people, ready to present my poem in Open-Mike Friday. Like every other classmate, you must think of me as the freak, the girl too shy to speak, the lunatic. Like I cared! Nobody tries to figure me out; they think I am what I appear to be, I am a book judged by my cover. If you also have that image of me, so sorry, you will have a great disappointment.

I haven’t lived in Bronx my whole life; I used to live in the most exotic place in the USA, Hawaii. Ever since my younger sister died 3 years ago in a tragic car accident, my family and I moved trying to find a place to restart. For some unexplainable reason my beloved parents chose Bronx.

I haven’t been myself since my sister Morgan left us. I used to be the most talkative girl in my class, the one that was always shining and bringing joy to people’s life. I used to be a comedian, my life was a stage, and the spotlight was mine. Now, I am only a worker on the filthy backstage. Caring, lovable, always ready to help everyone, and the most reliable person. People think I’ve changed from being that girl, but I haven’t.

This is how I ended up with the courage and urge to present my poem. I figured that since I used to express myself through music, why not poetry? Known for composing the most heartfelt music, I decided to start writing again, but trying a different style. I want people to know my story and to listen to what I have to say. I have honey colored hair and caramel skin, which is quite rare in Bronx. My bangs and clear ocean eyes make me look girly, especially since I’m petite. You’d think boys would notice me...the only one that seems to acknowledge my existence is Raul. He loves painting; I guess we have an artistic connection.

Tanisha is almost done presenting her poem, reciting after someone as stunning as the god of beauty gives me butterflies. People may have horrible thoughts like: “ Oh, why the hell is this piece of trash going after that babe?” Tanisha presented her poem with excellence, and the all the students applauded feverishly.

Since my sister passed away I lost the courage to present in front of an audience. Morgan was the reason I composed, my inspiration, after she was gone, I didn’t have the motivation to continue. I didn’t actually believe it would be this terrifying! A single spot light focusing on me, the rest of the class was dark except for the audience’s big round sparkly eyes. Tension filled the air, every muscle in my body suddenly rigid. The camera’s red light went on, indicating that I had to start. A sweat runs down my freckly cheek, my mouth opened but no sound came out, I became a statue.

My sensitive ears seem to have heard something, like a faint whisper of someone calling my name...Finally, I hear it: Ann. Nobody called me that but my sister; I closed my eyes not wanting to believe what I heard. When my eyes finally responded my body’s command and opened, I see a faint image of my sister sitting by the window. I was in a dream, a dream I wanted to have of my sister since her death. Smiling a sad smile, she waves and nods. Teardrops fall from my face and hit the floor with a loud splash, which only I seem to hear. My sister’s image gave me all the strength I needed to continue my adventure. Mouth opened and I recited my poem.

Life by Anne Jhonson

The light
The whisper
Faint like your last breath
Gives you the hope of life

Tyrone

Anne just presented her poem. Ain't nothing what I expected. Didn't even know her name to say the truth. She ended up singing a song in the end, that girl knows how to use her voice. I am a rapper; we really could do something together. I can see some future with that chick. Her voice, my rap... maybe we can become a famous couple.

Wendell Highstader by Luca Floris

I've never had a friend like Sterling. That homey ain't like the others in this average school. It's as if Sterling could aim right through that bearded, skinny, black and very petite young man, me. He understands that I want to be seen from the inside, like Janelle.

I attempt to talk to Janelle every single morning. I have an enormous thing for her, so grand that I pray everyday at night wishing that I could have her. Janelle is so delicate; once she touched my hands with hers and they were so smooth and clean. She would be the one beautiful delight in my life since my mom died of AIDS.

If only I were like Devon. I know Janelle likes him. She keeps gawking at him like a snake prepared to eat a chicken. I would approach Janelle, but I'm too shy.

"Wass up," Sterling seems surprised at first, but realizes it's me and gives me the tightest brotherly hug. We both know each other really well; in fact, we are best friends. He was very charming when I first entered this school, like a hotel concierge with his new guests. Now we treat each other really well.

Sterling and I subsequently start studying for our math quiz, it looked as if I would take a lifetime to learn everything. We always studied close to the lockers, excluded from students. At least we were "A" plus students, which was extremely rare in this school.

Not even ten minutes studying and that imprudent and silly Leon shows up.

"Hey shorty, hey fag what you guys up to?" Leon is a bully that measures one meter and 96 centimeters, that is, millions of times bigger than me. He smells our blood from thousands of kilometers away like a shark. He bullies us because I am extremely short and because Sterling once kissed him on the cheek. Another reason for this nonsense is because Leon is jealous of our excellent grades.

"Leon, please leave us, we are trying to study and you are not helping." Those words came out of my mouth as if I wasn't shy, even though I knew they were no good.

Those words struck Leon like lightning and the next thing I know he is approaching Sterling and me.

"You two are nothing but two freaks with no friends." I had freed the bull and he was hungry for some meat.

He pushed Sterling and I knew I was next, but I couldn't protect myself.

Leon was a fast striker and he displayed it this morning. Not even one second after the loud BAM caused by Sterling falling on the ground, I smelled the blood odor on the ground. I had been punched so hard that Mr. Ward heard the disharmonized and loud sound of the shouting of the kids surrounding me. Mr. Ward came to my rescue. On my way to the nurse, Mr. Ward described to me that my nose smelled like rotten eggs and that the blood took over my face. He asked about what happened. I wouldn't answer his questions, he would have to wait for the Open Mike; I had something special in mind.

Inside
by Wendell Highstader

My favorite preposition
Certainly not yours
What Am I?
You are blank like your homework sheet
In the mist I don't see you
But I am everywhere
In the dark you are not present
And I control
Wherever with four senses, in, through, on, behind
I'll be in a place you can easily find
Now where are you?
Bam, Boom, Pow, Wow
You are invisible
And I am Mr. Majestic Magic Man
You are nothing
And I am myself,
One billion times better than you

Tyrone

Shorty is extremely shy, but he knows how to express himself through poetry. He has a future, at least as a poet, but now his biggest worry is Leon. Leon is on his tail and unless he escapes, he is going to get caught.

Fay Rayman
by Diana Rosario

Everyone has friends. Everyone but me. It's not my fault I'm scared to meet new people, it's just how it is, every time anyone sees me, they look at me like I'm a smelly, rotten, and decomposed walking fish. I wish I could be more like Tyrone, he isn't afraid of anything and is always the center of attention, but me, I'm just a nobody. Every single day it's the same thing; everyone just stomps on me like I'm a tiny ant. The only time I was ever noticed was when I knocked Porscha Johnson's books down by accident. You could literally feel the tension. Porscha was staring at me like I had just insulted her. I tried to explain to her what happened, but she wouldn't budge. That was until Tanisha came in and told her to cut it out or she'd call the principal. That was it, my 15 minutes of fame. More like 15 seconds. People started dispersing from the halls while I just kept on standing there. After a few minutes, the silence disappeared and the hallways had never sounded so loud in my life.

Last week I would've believed that this incident was the only exciting thing to happen in my life, but it wasn't. I was debating with myself whether or not I should try out for the Open Mike. Some of the poems I made last year were stuck at the bottom drawer of my closet. I could read one of those. I actually am pretty good with the writing stuff. Too bad no one bothered to ask. In the end, I reluctantly stuck my hand in the bottom drawer and fished out one of my best and oldest poems. It wasn't that hard to find it considering how small my room is. It's a little messy for my dad's taste; he always said a French girl was supposed to have a clean room, not at all like my room, which resembles a pigpen. Whatever. He's gone and as far as I'm concerned, that's the nicest thing he's ever done. Back to the "Open Mike" situation. When I finished reading my poem, there wasn't a single person NOT clapping.

I was pretty sure it was all a joke though. After, I quickly ran to the library. I'm pretty fast too and got there quickly. That's why I'm captain of the cross-country team. Anyways, I ran to the library to isolate myself from that crazy crowd. My books are my best friends. Or at least they never criticize me.

About 30 minutes later, Tanisha and her gang came strolling in. I thought they were gonna give me a hard time for reading my poem in front of the whole class, but no.

"What you did was pure gold," Tanisha said with a smile wiped across her face. Sometimes I hate that girl for being so pretty.

"Thanks" I mumble, I turned back to facing my book 'cause I was seeing too much beauty. Janelle started saying something on how great my poem was, but I couldn't hear her 'cause her voice died down. I was talking with a person and that's when I thought to myself, "Maybe I'm not alone after all."

What You See by Fay Rayman

What you see, it's not what I really am,
Look into my eyes and you will see all the pain I'm going through,
What you see, isn't even half of what it really is,
But the again, I was never really seen,
Never cared for, forgotten,
I tried to hold on,
But it always slipped away,
Why didn't you see?
Why didn't you stare?
Why didn't care?
That doesn't matter anymore,
'Cause I am noticed,
I am seen,
And I am not alone.

Tyrone

I didn't notice that sister in our class before. Ever. I didn't even know she was from our grade! Good thing she stepped out or she would've been stuck in the darkness. When she went and read her poem, everyone was as surprised as I felt. The girl knows how to make a good poem.

Why didn't she speak up before? She looks lonely. Or she looked lonely. After lunch I saw her walking out of the library arm-in-arm with the caramel cutie. "And I am not alone," well she definitely isn't anymore!

Porsha Johnson by Nikki Grimes

I slam my tray down on the table across from Leslie and Chankara. Diondra looks up, startled, from the next table, then turns back to her lasagna.

"The minute I turn twenty-one, I'm changing my name," I say to no one in particular. I mean it."

"Why wait?" says Chankara. We've had this conversation before. "Why not change it now?"

I shake my head. "Too complicated."

"Fine, then. Count to ten, and try this." She slices off a square of pizza from her plate and shoves it in my mouth.

Chankara's a problem solver. She has no patience for talking a thing to death. Do something about it or shut up is her motto. I guess she's right. But one of these days, the name Porsha will have to go. I'm tired of providing oversized boys with the raw material for adolescent jokes about me being a high maintenance mama, or some sort of luxury item. Then there are those oily leering dirty old men on my block who drool or wink at me when I pass on my way home, asking if they can take me for a test drive. Please. But for now, I'm stuck with Porsha. I can live with it a while longer, though.

It's amazing how easy it is to get a bad reputation. My whole life, I ran around letting people pick on me, laughing it off when they teased me, fast-talking my way out of fights. They'd call me four eyes,

or stuck-up, or Miss Bug-eyed Bookwork, and I'd pretend their words were water and let them roll off of my back. Now, I'm nobody's duck, and their words sting a whole lot more than water, but I hold my temper. It took a bully nine straight months of riding me to cause my thermometer to boil. And once I lost it, did anybody blame it on the bully? No. They start calling me crazy, whispering it behind my back. It was as if that other Porsha, the easygoing, even tempered one, never existed. Truth is, she always did, always will.

Diondra and Chankara know that. And now, so does Leslie. If only the other kids knew the truth. I could never beat anybody the way I beat Charmayne last year. I'd be afraid to. What if I couldn't stop? What if there was no one around to pull me off? I could kill somebody. I know it's in me. I've got Mama's blood running in my veins, haven't I? She came close enough to killing me, more than once.

When I was twelve, she went on one of her tears and punched me from one side of the room to the other because I didn't wash the dishes. I don't think that was the real reason, though. She was probably just stressed out from working overtime, from dealing with a hard-to-please new boss, or from juggling bills, and I caught the hard end of it. But who cares about the real reasons? The thing is, the same kind of ugly anger lives in me. I couldn't really see that until after mom died. I hope that monster never shows her face again, no matter what.

So I find ways to keep her in check, when anger rips a hole in me now, I punch a wall or run 'til the wind cuts my breath off. Once, I sat on a curb running a piece of broken bottle across my fingertips. Lucky for me the shard had a dull edge that left a jigsaw of scratches on me, but not a whole lot of blood. I know it was stupid thing to do, but anything's better than allowing those fingers to hurt somebody else. I couldn't live with that. Not again. Not ever.

No, these kids have nothing to fear from me. They just don't know it.

Leslie says I've got to learn to let people in, and I know she's right. Poetry just may be a way to do that. I mean it worked with Devon, didn't it? And Tyrone. And Anne. We all got to see another side of them. Even Janelle gets up there-Miss Shyness herself! I've never seen her turn so bold, although the boldness only seems to last as long as she's up front reading her poems. Still, that's something. Drake was the biggest surprise, though. Who would have guessed he wrote poetry? And he knows his poems by heart, no less.

Maybe I can change people's minds about me too. It's worth a shot. I better do it quick, though. There are only a few Open Mikes Fridays left before school's out, and the last one will be at assembly, and I don't plan on getting up in front of a whole group of stingers my first time out. Friday is only two days away, and I know exactly what poem I'm going to read.

A Letter to My Mother By Porsha

Dear Mom,

You with the hypodermic needle in your arm,
I never said good-bye, or joined your funeral procession
because I was too angry at the time.

Leaving me seemed to be your choice.
Why make it? Was it something that I did or said?
Weeks after you were dead, those questions
hammered me until I thought my heart would shatter.

But then, as my friend told me, the why of your absence
doesn't really matter. Besides, I'm older now
and understand a little about pain, and the crazy things
it drives us to do. So, even though this may be overdue

(remember: Some thing are better late than never)-
Mom, I finally forgive you

Love, Porscha.
P.S: Good-bye.

Tyrone

Now I know school's almost over. We came to our English class yesterday and found our poems and drawings gone from the wall. Porscha was about to freak, along with everybody else, 'till Mr. Ward surprised us with a class anthology. He'd gone to some quick-copy place and made up books for each of us with copies of our work. It was pretty cool the way he hooked it up. I can't wait to show my moms.

It's kinda sad seeing the walls all bare. But hey, today was our last Open Mike Friday, so it was time for our stuff to come down. Besides, we were only there long enough to take attendance. Then we headed for the auditorium to have Open Mike there as part of the assembly, just like Mr. Ward planned.

The hall was crowded by the time I got there. I looked around for that reporter, but I don't think he made it. Yeah, well, I thought. His loss.

I slipped into a seat in the front row just as the principal called everybody to attention. Sitting up front ain't my thing, but this assembly was different.

Our whole class was there so we could reach the stage quicker to read our work. I was down with that.

The principal made a couple of announcements, but don't ask me about what. Nobody was interested. We all sat up, though, when he called the Teach to stage.

Mr. Ward explained what Open Mike Friday was about and how we got started. (Wesley yelling, "Y'all got me to thank! Remember that!") I was only half listening 'cause I was waiting 'til Teach got to the good stuff, meaning when we finally got to read.

"Before we get started," he said, "I thought it would be good if one or two of the students who have participated in Open Mike this year would say a few words about it has meant to them." I checked down the row real quick.

"I'll pass," said Rose.

Anne and Elisa had "Don't look at me" stamped all over their faces. Josh didn't look much better. Jonas rose outta his seat, but then sat down again.

Cracked me up. Everybody was suddenly shy. Not me. I stood, headed for the podium.

I cleared my throat, rolled my shoulders a few times to get relaxed.

"Today, Tyrone," said Mr. Ward.

"Yeah, my brotha," chimed in Porsha.

"I'm getting there," I said, taking a second to adjust the microphone. "Hello? Can you hear me?"

"Yeah, dude, but you ain't saying anything," said Andrew.

"Aiight. Just give me a minute." Everybody laughed.

"Okay. I just wanted to say I'm really glad I got to do this poetry thing because I feel like, even though the people in our class are all different colors and some of you speak a different language and everything, I feel like we connected. I feel like I know you now. You know what I'm saying? I feel like we're not as different as I thought."

I looked out at Raul, Anne, Rose, Devon, my homey Wesley-my whole crew-and felt something deep inside my chest, something that made me swallow hard.

"You guys are okay," I said. "Even you, Andrew, with your skinny, rocker self." Andrew grinned. Josh patted him on the back and everybody else tee-heed for a hot second. Then I went back to my seat.

When I sat down, our whole crew was clapping. Chloe and Tasha whistled. Nobody said it, but it was like I had spoken for all of us. You know what I'm saying? And that don't happen everyday.

I'm glad I didn't choke up there, 'cause now the whole school's talking about that assembly.

Probably be talking about it all summer, we was so hot. We sizzled! Ray-bans read, James did his thing, my man Andrew and me did a new cipher with his guitar, and I even got Porscha to read her piece again.

Except for Wesley and me, we all pretty much did our old poems. The kids in our class were the only ones who'd already heard them. Besides, most of the kids want to wait 'til next year to break out the new stuff, 'cause Mr. Ward already told us he plans to have Open Mike in al his classes then. Cool, huh?

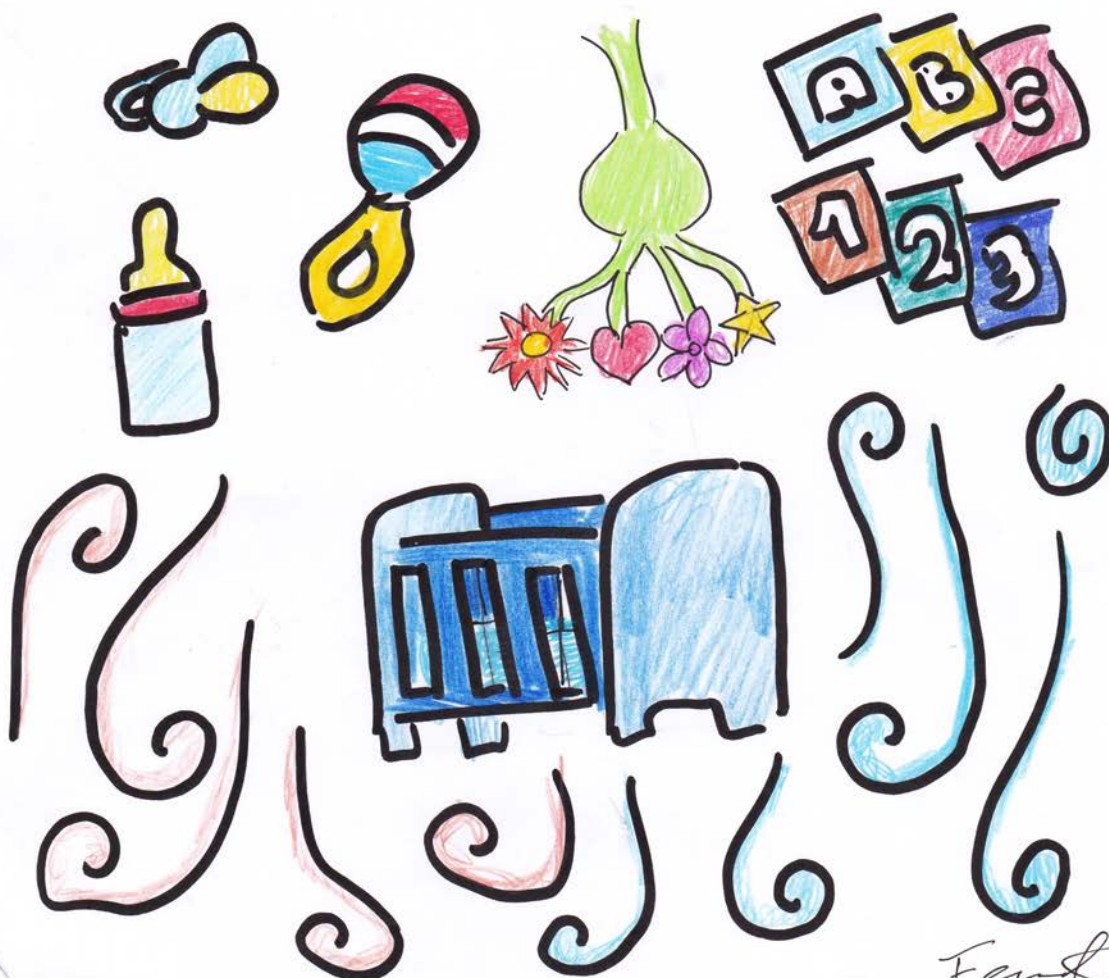
After assembly, Mr. Ward came up and clapped me on the back. "I like what you had to say, Tyrone. And I loved your cipher," he told me. "Any chance I'll see you next year?"

"I don't know Mr. Ward," I said. "I've been thinking about hooking up with some guys who want to start a band. I might have to skip school and go on tour; you know what I'm saying? So I can't make no promises." I'm blowing smoke about this tour, and Teach knows it, but that's the game.

"I understand but I did want to let you know, we'll be hosting a poetry slam here next year," said Mr. Ward.

And guess what. All of the sudden, the man's got my attention.

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES



Fendi

Childhood Memories
by The Class of 2016
Illustrations by Federico Ivanissevich

Introduction

by Juliana Baptista

I used to live in a magical world, where everything was possible, and sadness had no place. I used to live in a perfect universe, in which I decided what to be, and life had no limits. I used to think the world was flawless, and imagine it would one day be mine. I used to be an enchanted fairy, a powerful queen, a graceful princess, or even a brave knight. I would be the one losing a shoe, eating a poisoned apple, and bringing my grandmother treats. When I was a child, being an adult was an amusing game.

Tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock. Time used to go slowly, and there was plenty of it. Every day seemed to be an ever-lasting adventure, full of new things to learn and discover. I bet being a child is now the dream of many, where everything was joyful, simple, and flawless, so much different from reality. In the real world, the one in which most of us now live in, cruelty and violence take over. Now, all responsibilities fall upon us, and the so-called justice is not exactly how it was supposed to be. Many say that to err is human; however, I feel we do not have this right anymore. In the past, mistakes were only used to teach another lesson without grave and crucial consequences. Nowadays even the smallest decision or slightest mistake may impact us for our whole lives.

I honestly miss the time in which my biggest preoccupation was in choosing the color pencil to color my drawing. I miss the time in which my greatest dream was to be an adult. Now, ironically, as a grown-up, my greatest dream is of being a child.

The Proud Look on My Dad's Face

by Maria Luiza Torres

Every time I close my eyes, I wish I could go back to my childhood years. The times where riding a bike was as hard as an Algebra problem, reading a book was a challenge, and sleeping early was a rule. Times when I didn't choose my meals; and in which, my mother, always carefully and patiently, chose my outfits every morning. Days in which studying was only reading two pages and going to school included naptime after lunch. Days like these don't exist anymore in my life; unfortunately, things have changed for me. However, my memories still stay; and I'll never forget the day in which my father, patiently and proudly, taught me how to ride the bike.

It was Sunday or Saturday morning, I can't remember exactly. The sun was boiling hot, but the wind blew in our faces like it blew the trees, which gave the feeling that it wasn't as hot as it really was. We were in a condominium in Bahia, one in which my family and I usually spend summer, and my dad got up early to teach me how to ride a bicycle. I couldn't contain the excitement, so like every other child I woke up early ready to learn the new skill. We spent all morning trying to keep me balanced on the bike, it seemed like I'd never learn. I felt like a dumb child since most of my friends could already ride on one. I stopped for a while, only for lunch, and with a persistent attitude I walked out of the house with my dad again. The sun started to set; it felt like we had been there for years, but at the end of that exhausting day, I learned how to ride a bike. We could all see the proud look on my dad's face; finally, he could say to everyone he knew, that he had taught his daughter one of the most pleasurable things on Earth, how to ride a bicycle.

The Golf Cart

by Valentina Lopes da Costa

The fresh breeze in my face just made the fact of being in vacation sweeter. There, in Portugal, with my whole family, just brought such joy to my heart that it felt like I was in heaven, with puffy clouds massaging my back, surrounded by towers of candy. There, in that magnificent resort was the one and only place I was allowed to drive; even, if it was just a golf cart. So there I was, happily accompanied by my brothers taking a trip through one of many golf fields. Suddenly I couldn't believe what my eyes saw: Don-Careconez, the supervisor of all golf fields and carts!

This human being wasn't like any other; his head shined as it hit the sun's reach, red with evilness. His terrifying "careca", baldhead, and his turbo golf cart fired at us with such intensity that everyone's eyes almost popped out of their eyelids. We knew it was prohibited to drive in the gold fields, especially with a nine year old in command, but what could we do other than run from this maniac? That's why I, with my tiny legs, pressed the acceleration pedal until it touched the cart's floor. Our golf cart was fast, but nothing compared to Don-Carecenez' turbo, so in less than seconds he was glued to our back. Trying to get out of reach, I made a steep turn left that led us to high grass, and no sign of a road. Don-Carecenez wasn't expecting that, so he went straightforward. I made a couple of more turns until he was out of my sight, and that's when I knew I was finally safe. With my heart still, almost bouncing out of my chest and my brothers congratulating me for my skillful driving, I couldn't help thinking how that irreplaceable memory would never leave me.

Nostalgia **by Isabella Lacerda**

I'm not sure if I have a favorite memory, but one of my favorite memories is on the tip of my tongue: waking up early, prompt to have fun. Monday, the hated day, was somehow my favorite day. That's when I'd wake up, skip about and play. A long, wooden table right in front of me and sugar drenched plates was all I could see. I can still remember the freshly baked bread; filling the air surrounding my head. Through crystal-like windows the sun would shine. Made me remember that the day was all mine.

No worries, no homework, no hard work to do. Just my Barbie's and plush animals and me too. The smooth, flawless grass brushes my body as lay on a soft pillow of meadow. The scent, spread by the green world that surrounded me, polished my nose as a bittersweet fantasy. That glowing, faded sound brought by rainy days shifted from side to side, beating to rainy Mays. When the rain was gone and the sun would shine, I'd look out the window to see everything fine. It was nothing but evident. It was me, myself, running against time.

A Hole in One **by Anders Hove**

I have many good memories from my childhood, but the best one is my first Hole-in-one. It happened a summer day when the sun was higher than heaven in south of Norway. I was about nine and didn't like to play golf; therefore, I always tried to find an excuse to not play, but this time it paid off.

As we came to the first tee I was grumpy as an old man, but got a nice first shot so I changed that attitude rapidly. I played the rest of the hole pretty well and made a double-bogey (6), which was pretty good for me at that time. As I came to the second hole my dad told me to tee-off from the ladies' tee instead of the kids' tee. I didn't agree with him, but accepted it in the end. From the ladies' tee I hit it straight into the water; I went to the kids' tee, which was where I was supposed to shoot from. Since my dad had told me to go to the ladies' tee instead of the kids' tee he told me it was okay if I repeated from the kids' tee. It was shorter, but I still had to use my new 5-wood. My dad helped me with my aiming and then the magic came; I hit the best shot of my life and it landed 5 yards in front of the hole and it just rolled in. My dad, proud as a fresh parent, screamed and threw me up in the air. Ever since, I always try to go for the hole from the tee on that hole and I will always do.

Alone at Disney **by Carolina Rocha**

On a summer vacation in 2003, I went with my family to Orlando. Like all other trips I have taken with me family, we got lost at least five times before finding the park. Thank God there is GPS nowadays; nevertheless, when we finally made it to the park. I remember us walking through a colorful street full of stores. The stores had many temptations, also known as "toys", displayed in their shop windows. Each store grabbed my attention more than the other. I kept walking when I suddenly saw it:

a Nintendo DS. It was smiling at me through the glass. It was so beautiful. It was nearly impossible not to stop and stare at it for a little while, since it was my dream to have one at the time. As I stared at it, I just wondered what the chances of me getting one were.

When I turned around to ask my dad if he could buy me one, I noticed they were gone! As fast as lightning my dad and Gabriela, my twin sister, had disappeared. Believe it or not, Disney can be a scary place when you are alone; those big crowds, each one going in a different direction, it's impossible for you to recognize a single familiar face. Finally, the nightmare was soon over. As fast as they disappeared, they appeared to find me. But the problems were still not over. It took forever to make my sister stop laughing at me! I had to endure her annoying me for the rest of the trip; however, despite the incident, I really loved that trip, and it's sure a memory that will never be forgotten.

Serpentina by Isabela Oliveira

Carnival has always been part of my life. One of my earliest memories is being dressed as little mermaid together with my gypsy cousin. We were beautiful and free just like butterflies. We jumped on trampolines until we touched the sky. Clearly, then we played more games, yet it still seemed that we were fully charged like a wind up doll. The night lasted forever and we still had time to play with "serpentina," a long Brazilian Yo-Yo made of paper.

Gabriela, an amazing cousin, and I looked like two immortal kangaroos, hopping everywhere, never getting tired. We didn't sleep the entire night. When the sun finally came up, we went our separate ways, looking forward to our beds. That was just one of the many great and unique memories as a kid, and, therefore, it was unforgettable.

Colombian Granja by Angela Montero

I can still recall the freezing cold of the river sweeping past me, but I barely noticed it, I was too busy fooling around with my cousins. It was late August and I had gone with my family back to Colombia for vacations. I have always had a big family, especially from my dad's side. My dad has nine siblings and I have a lot of cousins. These vacations were one of those rare occasions where all ten brothers and sisters could get together.

We arrived at Mogotes, the small town where my grandfather lived, and finally arrived at my grandfather's farm. It was huge, like acres and acres of land just going on endlessly. Beside the farm was a river, and beside the river was a tree with a rope hanging down its side just waiting for you to swing on it and jump in the river. After the whole family had lunch, and the adults decided to go horseback riding, my cousins and I decided to go down to the river. When I got there I threw myself at the rope to be the first one to jump in. We stayed in the river for hours and hours until the moon rose up into the sky and we had to go back to the house. That day and the ones that followed were some of my favorite memories of vacation and I look forward to going to the family farm again.

Walking on Glass by Gaby Cofello

When I hear the word "memory" the first thing that comes to mind is my childhood. I'm still a child, and the memories are still counting. Although, When I think about my favorite memory, it hits my mind very quickly. It wasn't the best memory, but it was definitely memorable. I was 6, and a very energetic child. I mocked everything I heard and said, in this case, my brother, Lucas.

Him and Leo were running around the house pretending to be Ferraris. I decided to join, and started running along. I felt as fast as a cheetah. I could hear my mom telling us we were going to get hurt, but to me that wasn't an issue. Suddenly, I feel pressure and hear a CRASH! I had run into, and shattered our glass door. All I could feel was pain, and a little regret, as I fell on top of millions of pieces of glass. The next thing I can remember is waking up with stitches on my arm, forehead, upper lip, and legs. I was a complete mess. Learned to be more careful and listen to my mom, and If I ever forget, I have scars to remind me.

The EARJ Adventure Club Bike Ride by Alexis Arbitol

Saturday April 14th, 2012 was an awesome day! Sagare, our cool teacher, took my friends and I for a thrilling bike ride. It was as hot as fire during the bike ride; we had to struggle. We went from "Posto 12" until Leme and then we came back. At Leme we enjoyed "picole" or popsicles while Mr. Sagare was flirting with some chicks for like 1,000,000 hours. After all the flirting, we continued on our ride back to Posto 12 in Leblon. When I finally drank water it felt like I was taking a nice cold bath. It was a great trip and I hope we do another bike trip!

Goodbye Rio, Hello Boston and Disney World by Fernando Abreu Cecchi

In 2005, during my childhood, I had an experience that would be remembered forever. Although this happened ages ago, it is memorable to me because it was the first of many times I would be going out of my country to fulfill my dream, every 7 year old kid's dream, to go to Disney World. I was as excited as a cat getting a back rub. The day finally came and I was super happy. I don't remember much about the plane ride because I slept like a baby in my mom's lap.

However, I remember everything once we hit the ground. Before we could go to Disney World, my parents had to attend a conference in Boston. I stayed with my aunt in a hotel until the conference was over. I passed the time playing basketball at the neighbor's house, sightseeing, and shopping at the mall.

After the first week, which was really boring, had finally passed, we went to Disney World and had tons of fun. We went on lots of rides and I had the time of my life. The next day my family and I went to the mall and had fun with buying lots of electronic devices. We also went to all the parks in Disney World such as Animal Kingdom, Hollywood Studios, Epcot, and Magic Kingdom. Later that week we also went to the parks outside of Disney World, which were Sea World and Bush Gardens.

Together with my family I had lots of fun at Disney World and even in Boston too, which is why this trip is very memorable to me even though it happened again in 2009.

The Zoo by Kristine Bersås

My most memorable childhood memory is probably when I used to go to my grandfathers every summer; we used to go to the zoo, to the park, and to the beach. I remember the salt in my hair and all the millions of sand grains between my toes.

My favorite part of each summer was going to the zoo; the giraffe, who was very tall and scary eating grass out of my hands. The antelopes ran as fast as the wind, the monkeys were as loud as a rocket, and the lions were as big as a mountain. I miss these summers; now every summer I dream of going back.

Morocco **by Felipe Ribeiro**

My favorite childhood memory was when I went to Morocco. It is an exciting country like where everything was an adventure. What I liked the most about Morocco was riding a camel in the Sahara desert; however, I fell off the Camel shortly after mounting the monster. I went to many different cities such as the capital known as Rabat, Marrakesh, and Fez. Morocco is the most amazing and interesting place in the world; it's the best place I have ever been to.

This memory beats all others because it was a vacation our whole family went on, and, also, because it was the closest we've been in a long time. Morocco was a fun and adventurous place to go and I will never forget the country settle in Northern Africa.

Nothing Fun about This Plane **by Ezequiel Gutierrez**

The beginning of my vacation was boring. The first event was the travel. As I walked into the airplane, I knew I would soon fall into an eternal pit of absolute boredom. As I sat on my seat I began staring at the window waiting for a miracle to happen. With no warning, the airplane began flying faster than light, like a bird! Although the plane was moving so fast, when I looked at my watch the seconds were getting more and more leisurely like they were refusing to pass and fighting to stay still. Until now, it had been an utterly unfantastic travel.

Once high in the sky there was nothing to do. I did an attempt to sleep, but, it was in vain; the engines were really loud and didn't let me sleep. I looked at the window and could only see an empty whiteness; the plane was inside a cloud. Annoyed at the fact that there were a few hours left, my eyes began looking around at people and things but failed to detect anything fun. Only ten minutes had gone by... there still was a long time till I got there and the journey had barely began.

Brazil 2002 World Cup Champions at Disney **by Eduardo Alves**

Childhood, always full of adventures and fun, is the time of your life when you are as happy as a kid on Christmas. It really is a time of humorous and unforgettable memories. One memory that keeps coming back to me is a memory of a trip to Disney in 2002. Brazil was in the FIFA World Cup finals; therefore, all of my family was cheering more than ever. I was excessively excited; however, I was four years old and, therefore, had no concrete idea of what was going on. Brazil, known to be the best country in soccer in the whole world, was playing Germany.

In the final moments of the match, Ronaldo, eventually the best player in the world, scored Brazil's second goal after an unbelievable pass from Rivaldo. There was a massive celebration in the little space of our hotel room. The poor neighbors had to be furious; it was 5 am. The party was worth it and the trip was great while it lasted. That is one unforgettable moment in my childhood, great times.

The World Was My Oyster **by Ashley Chimezie**

During the summer you have a lot of time on your hands. You don't have any homework and you don't have a hard English test to study for. It's just you and time: nothing more, nothing less. What I did to waste this endless time was walk out the front door and use the whole neighborhood street as my playground.

Oddly enough there were a lot of kids on my street. There was Pekam, Michael, Julia, Jasmine, Jayda, Max, and Ally. When lunchtime arrived, my brothers and I would knock on doors to see if they could play. If their parents said yes, the adventure began.

If the sun was blazing down on us, we would all walk to the neighborhood pool. We would jump in and suddenly enter a home of mermaids. Other days we would play in my backyard, which had swings sets and loopy slides. When it rained, which did not happen often, we made the best of the miserable weather. After the plip-plops and the frightening thunder, the puddles in the streets became our best friends. Everyone, and I mean everyone, would run out screaming with colorful rain boots and jump around like silly fools. The things we did were an endless list of fun and exciting things: playing hide and go seek in the dark, skate board tag, ding dong ditch, super hero, four square, and pyramid to name a few. Whenever I was with my childhood friends, the world was my oyster.

This was the time in my life when everything was perfectly blissful. Playing outside until six with friends, eating dinner with my family, and then sleeping until another day of the same.

Unstoppable Pranksters by Alexia Arias

When I was about 9 years old, Giulia and I would bring lots of M&Ms in very small packages from home to school. We would prank other people after we had placed all of the chocolate M&Ms on the floor and smash them with our feet. We were as playful as clowns when we rapidly ran down the stairs. We offered the smashed M&M'S to everyone we saw on the playground. That day, I gave M&Ms to Caroline and she told the teacher. Caroline, a hygienic girl, almost vomited as she figured out she had just eaten a piece of chocolate smashed by our feet and told the teacher. We pranked people with that exact same joke a million times per day! While our parents were called to school and we couldn't play anymore during brunch time, we turned into furious lions, but maintained our smile of joy. Our beloved teacher punished us, but the punishment didn't matter. We would always repeat it again and again. Ms.Grace, a sweet teacher, always kept an eye open for Giulia and I because she never knew what we would do next.

Giulia and I were unstoppable partners. We were never allowed to sit next to each other; however, we always found a way to sneak out to the bathroom and plan some more jokes or pranks for those who least expected it. We would also give kids candies, which turned their mouths completely blue; it was dedicated especially for the ones who tattled on us to Ms.Grace. Even though Giulia and I would always get in trouble, we will never forget or regret having this childhood memory, for we always remember it with a great smile of joy upon our faces just as we did before.

Ugliest, Smallest, and Most Vulnerable Thing by Luiza Villela

There was a time where the grass was greener; your dad was the tallest man in the world and also the only one that really mattered. Your mom was the most beautiful woman in the world and next to her was the safest place to be. School was basically gluing and coloring and your highest achievement was saying good morning and thank you. I miss the time when you wake your mother up at 4 o'clock in the morning and she is happy to see you. You were the ugliest, smallest, and most vulnerable thing on earth and yet the most important thing for them.

You usually spent your days dreaming and nights not allowing people to do so; however, no one was allowed to be mad at you. I miss eating everything I wanted and not even thinking about it, I miss waking up earlier on Saturday's to watch a special program on Nickelodeon, and having Friday nights to watch Hannah Montana. I miss the time where the worst thing that could ever happen to you was missing one of your favorite TV shows. The feeling of missing something is the price you pay to live unforgettable memories. Childhood memories.

Snowmass **by Paloma Abitbol**

Since my father was young, he has gone to Snowmass every year for skiing; in fact, I do the same, every year. I go to Snowmass. Since I was two, my father has taken me every year to ski in Colorado. My brother Alexis and I are really good at skiing down the largest mountain, and since I've done this since I was little, it's as easy as counting to three. I will never forget the times I fell and hurt myself, which helped me learn from my mistakes. Also, I will never forget the time I skied a double black diamond run for the first time. Black diamonds are the most difficult runs down a mountain; a double black diamond is even more difficult.

I can still remember the feelings I had; it was a mixture of happiness and fear, and I thought I was going to die. My father, the quick skier Michel, and my mother, the one with many skills, Anna Carolina, were so proud. They were impressed. They never thought I would be able to do ski a double black at such a young age; I was six. After I was done skiing the super hard run, I could see two of my friends I traveled with at the bottom of the hill, Malu and Carol. They could see my excitement, and they asked what happened. I told them what I had just finished doing my first double black diamond. Malu was so happy for me. She gave me a huge hug and told me that the next run we would ski together. Carol was happy, but I think she was jealous since she practices a lot more than me and I did it before her. The next day, Malu and I skied many other black diamond runs and together we decided we would try to come back next year together and ski double-blacks. Every year Malu and I ski Snowmass together.

The Unexpected Explosion **by Jose Gabriel Bernardes**

BOOM! POW! The fireworks shouted like wild coyotes, while I admired its beauty. It was December 25, exactly 12 o'clock in the morning. Is there anything better than eating some grilled pork while pointing to the amusing fireworks with your family? I don't think so. I, Jose Gabriel Bernardes, the most intelligent kid in the whole wide world, was playing with fireworks. Everybody was chilling; my sister and I were drinking some soda, and my parents and grandparents were serving themselves some Champaign.

During all of this, I lit up a firework while it was in my hand. Normally there is no problem holding this type of firework with your hand, but I decided to shake to get a better effect on how the fire goes up into the sky. Bad luck came my way. The firework stick broke creating an enormous ball of fire on my middle finger. While I cried in despair, my grandfather shouted, furthermore, throwing a bucket of ice on my hand.

We sprayed medicine all over my wound and I was not able to ride my new present from Christmas: my bicycle.

Childhood Ashes **by Alexandre Sendas**

My family is all spread apart. My sister is working in the U.S; my grandmother lives in Ecuador; my brother, Daniel, goes to college in Miami; and my dad works 24/7, but when we are in vacation we all reunite and become a big happy family. These moments when we are together remind me of my childhood. When everything was simpler, no worries and no hate, and everyday was a new day. I was excited for everything and the world wasn't a dark place where dreams die, it was an adventure. The TV was a magical box that painted stories. A visit to the mall was a visit to outer space. School was exciting and brought me joy. Everything was perfect.

Nowadays a day is one number less on the countdown to my death. And the eyes that I use to have in those days have burned and became ashes. All the visions I had, all the things I saw and did are now memories, a childhood memory.

The Perfect Bike Ride **by Marina Garcia**

I remember just like it was yesterday, when I learned how to ride my bike. It was my 6th year birthday and for my present I really wanted a bicycle. For a child a bicycle was a magical object; it was absolutely amazing to have one. Looking at a flawless bike at a store made everything change; I wanted to possess a bike so badly, and I was determined to get one as my birthday present. I was thrilled when I received it from my mother. The bike was as beautiful as a sunset, all in white with a basket in front. In the back it had training wheels. I was sure in one week I would get rid of the training wheels and soon would be riding the bicycle in a blink of an eye. I tried several times on my own, and with the help of my parents. Riding a bike was as hard as riding a lion, which may seem as an overreaction, but it wasn't. I didn't know how to ride without the training wheels.

A few weeks after receiving my bike, I went to visit my cousins and brought my bike with me. When I got to their house, BANG! Surprise, my cousins knew how to ride a bicycle. Fortunately they taught me. I didn't get it at first; I tried about 1000 times and still couldn't get it right. I was falling down like house of cards off my bike; I had the scars to prove it. Finally, my older cousin taught me once more and I was sure I would get it right. I thought that maybe going down a hill would help because I would have more speed helping to keep my balance. My instincts were right, and I did it! I couldn't believe after all the trying I could ride my bike. I was so happy that I felt like flying through clouds in heaven. I, a six-year-old girl, now knew how to ride my bike. Nothing nor anyone could take that delightful feeling from me.

A Walk to Remember **by Aimee Sharman**

My favorite childhood memory was a walk my family and I used to always take on the weekends. We walked down to an old, wooden bridge over a flowing stream. The water used to flood my brain and the smell of the bracken always raged up my nose; the birds' songs cleared my head and helped me relax. The smell of moss from the trees was like ice cream for me. I would go on this walk regularly, but I never grew tired of it. We would each find a stick and throw it under the bridge at the same time and see which stick reached the other side first.

One particular Saturday was special as it was the first day of autumn and the leaves were turning different shades of green, yellow and orange; moreover the trees seemed to almost whisper my name that day. The trees rustled in the wind and gave me a sense of belonging; the wind ran through my hair. I inhaled the fresh air that was my world. Katie, my usually annoying sister, used to always race me back to our house after our walk. That day and the walk I will never forget!

Surfing Memoir **by Gwen Herd**

I had a lot of fun surfing. It got me motivated to get up and do something; besides, just sitting at home lounging around. The water twinkled like stars as the bright beautiful sun shined down on it. The sand was as soft as flour I would have stood in it all day if I could. The first thing we did was stretch; next, we did a running exercise. I felt like I did it one thousand times. We then headed to Copacabana, Posto 6. The water there was full of muscles; hence, Gaby, Nikki and I weren't looking forward to going in. We finally got in the water after about an hour wait, and then the real adventure started.

Nikki was up first, and you could tell she was not prepared for what was coming. I went next, but was not ready when the instructor pushed me; therefore, I fell off my board. A huge wave then came and crashed right before me. Nikki, my crazy funny friend, got tumbled in the wave, and got hit in the face by my board. We stayed in the water for about an hour then we headed back into the beach. Exhausted and hot I took off my wetsuit feeling as free as a bird. Gaby, my insane, and hilarious amiga, had to go because her driver was waiting. Nikki and I walked back to Arpoardor making Vincent, Jose and Berend carry our stuff. After our fun and adventurous morning Nikki and I were ready to get back home and shower.

Val D'Isère by Alicia Tisserand

One of the journeys that most marked me during my childhood was the first time my family and I traveled to Val D'Isère, France the ski station and I discovered snow. Arriving from Tokyo, Japan "The Land of the Rising Sun", one of the most overpopulated, cramped, neurotic cities in the world, the bright light, the cool breeze and white sparkling snow amazed me. With a nine-hour time difference, I felt as if I was floating around the air in a dream like in a hot air balloon hoping no one would bring me back to reality. As I entered the hotel, Christmas decorations covered the creaky chalet walls, cheerful music was playing, and velvety hot chocolate was being served next to the toasty roaring flames.

After several attempts of falling back asleep during the night that seemed already long enough; my sister and I tore open the heavy wool curtains ready to spend a whole day in the cold air. Being too small to ride the ski lifts and too young to get skis, we got sleighs. My first experience on a sleigh was disastrous. My sister and I were carried only half way up the slope and as we came rushing down my face turned into a frozen tomato splashed by water. My sister looked like a shiny pink frozen popsicle but no matter how cold and how wet we became we continued going up and down the same slope everyday for a whole week. My family and I loved Val D'Isère; therefore, we told all our friends about it, and, we still go back every year. This trip, to one of the most beautiful places in Europe, marked my childhood.

A Blink of My Eye by Thali Boruchovitch

I remember waking together with the sun, on the weekend just to watch cartoons. Thinking ten pm was late, not being able to finish a full plate. Coming home from school and arguing about the amount of the homework, just less than half of what we have today. Going to school, and having free time to paint the world with our wand of imagination. Imagining how it was possible that the sky was at night covered by a long black sheet of sparkly lights.

I remember making wishes to all the candles on my birthday cakes and how my lucky number was eight. I didn't have to worry about my style, and my homework took me just a while. Time, the thing that I would wish right now, is what I miss the most. It passed me by with just a blink of my eye. Years from now I will read these two paragraphs saying to myself how young I was, wishing and longing for that time.

My First and Last Little 8 by Sasha M. Szafir

These past few days were certainly unforgettable. This incredible trip will always run inside my memory. I had a great time with few of my best friends, even though we didn't win the tournament. Every single drill we tired our-selves with, every single sweat that swam through our cheeks made us proud because second place had our name carved in it. It couldn't be more perfect, waking up early, taking a gaze at the beautiful and breath taking views Brazil offers, and playing the game I most love and

cherish; I could call Little 8 my wonderland. Despite the fact that I froze to death at night, I had a blast and I took advantage of every minute I had left of my first and last little 8.

Faded Friendship by Julia Guimarães

If you look at us today, you would never believe we were once best friends. You'd never imagine how adventurous our recesses were. As close as Siamese twins, playing and running a 100,000 miles per hour. Kindergarten was our kingdom, Ms.Tati the queen, and we were the rebels in town. Bernardo, someone I rarely speak to nowadays, was once upon a time, my very best friend.

Our favorite game was Inu-Yasha; an extremely popular Japanese cartoon at the time. We were absolutely certain that we didn't belong in this world. Our placement here had been a dreadful mistake; we actually belonged to the feudal era, where Inu-Yasha and Agome lived. Sometimes I got absurdly enraged, because Chris came along. He'd come and play with us; however, I didn't like him the least bit. What made me even more infuriated, that my blood boiled sadistically, was when he'd come along and say: "Today we're going to play Ninja Turtles." And Bernardo would go along. I hated Ninja Turtles like I detest the cold; sitting during the whole recess was my only option when this life-wrecking tragedy came along.

Now a days, I don't hate Chris anymore. Just a little bit (kidding), and I don't watch Inu-Yasha. Maybe one day, I'll have kids that will watch cartoons and interpret them the next day. I just hope that they don't let their childhood friendships fade away, like it happened to me.

Wilderness Girl by Sierra Wicht

I would say that the best childhood memories I have were the ones that happened when I lived in the States, when I was little and still lived in Minnesota. My cousin, Austin, and I have always been wilderness children. We've always loved to play with frogs and salamanders, worms and bugs. We once had a salamander named Sally. She died slowly, though. First her tail fell off, then her arm, and then later, we dropped a rock on her because we thought she was in misery. She probably wasn't.

Those memories soon faded away after I moved to Rio. All the love for slimy creatures became disgusting to others, which made me put my outdoor, nature-y persona aside and turn into more of a city girl. I know that deep inside, if I really look closely, and remember the past, the wilderness curiosity in me will soon grow back.

Day 1 at EARJ by Marina Faria

My palms were sweating, I didn't know anybody and I was sure I was going to swallow my tongue. It was my first day here in EARJ and I already started not liking it here. It was hard making friends with people I didn't know, but I gave it a shot. Luisa Pinto, a funny and charismatic girl, was the first lovely person that caught my eyes. We had a lot of things in common, and I started to love EARJ; my kindergarten year was going to be a very memorable.

One tragic day in art class, Luisa was sitting in her favorite seat in the whole wide world. She quickly got up to go to the bathroom. I decided to play a particle joke on her and take her seat. My particle joke turned into a horrifying devastating fight when she returned. We fought the whole art class; I was kind of impressed that nobody caught us. She was very mad. Eventually, we were sent to the principal's office for our bickering. We talked to the counselor and made up; now we are more friends than ever.

My Vicious Brother by Vincent Dyen

My childhood was unimaginable; I had so much fun with my family. The best memories that I have from my childhood were situated here in Rio de Janeiro. I remember that everything seemed to be immense because of my height. I was tiny like a little ant; therefore, I always wanted someone to pick me up. My dad, tall and strong, would always be gracious to me because of my brother. My brother was as vicious as a lion, so he would blame all of his foolishness on me; therefore, my parents would get mad at me instead of my brother. I would get punished one million times because of my vicious big brother.

Even though I had some bad times with my brother, there were still some positive sides to my childhood. I remember when we were going around the pool in circles on our scooter. We would go around that pool like a gold fish go around a fish bowl. There were many awesome times when my cousins came over and we used to jump from the trampoline into the humongous pool. I would ride my little green bike around my residence, so I would meet many new people that were very kind to me. The best part of this was going to school on my little green bicycle. My childhood was filled with good and bad stuff; even though, I had a great time with my family.

The Sun Was Leaving the Sky by Thomaz De Lamare

The sunlight was slowly losing it's brightness as the shadows of darkness began to rise in the perfect sky. The magnificent view suddenly turned into a deep darkness, while my old pall Antonio Carlos Pele Braga and I were in the crystal colored ocean of Ipanema, after playing some amazing and exhausting soccer, at the most famous beach in Brazil. The water was as clear as a crystal stone and when the waves crashed on my body, I had the wonderful feeling of water going down my body and refreshing everything from the inside out. It felt like heaven was crying on top of my head. Antonio, strange as always, was talking about his life and how he was, while I was diving in the water; however, not getting sunk.

For a moment I was thinking what a day it was and how it couldn't be any better. Antonio was still talking about his life; he was distracted and acting like he was the only person left on the planet besides me. Suddenly I could hear the people in the sand screaming like it was the end of the world. Still not knowing what was happening I struggled to listen, until I heard the word "shark." My brain stopped for a minute and then I looked back and saw that black fin making circles ready to find its prey. His enormous shadow made me feel like I was an insect locked in a room full of people. My body moved without control and I could see my life flash before my eyes, but there was still a chance. With that little chance, adrenaline fulfilled my body and the only thing I could do was swim, and swim fast. Antonio was by my side swimming, the shark was getting closer every second; yet, it was not close enough to catch us. After that day, the beach was never the same, and it will never be....

Bingo, New Years, and Bahia by Ana Machado

My memory is extremely vague, but one thing I really remember from my childhood was my trip to Bahia. It was on December 2003. My family, some friends, and I went to spend the New Year at a friend's house. I remember a video that my sister made while we were on the plane. I was about 6 and I always carried this white and blue stuffed dog everywhere I went; his name was Bingo. My sister was asking me all kinds of questions, like what year are we moving on to, and where are we going. My mind shuffled looking for answers; therefore, I didn't know how to answer any of them. She realized that my empty young head was too confused and messed up to answer her questions.

When we arrived at the hotel, I was amazed with the desert and paradise beach right in front of the hotel. My eyes shined brighter than the sun and my smile was as big as the beach. I was so happy! On New Year's Eve, the party and the fireworks were gorgeous. This is my best memory of when I was young; I am sure this memory will be one of the most remarkable in my life.

Katy, Texas by Nikki Mattos

As I look back through my foggy memories from a long time ago, I remember spending most of my childhood in Katy, Texas. My 1st two best friends were boys, and now consider them my brothers. When I moved in to the neighborhood they were the first people I had talked to. I was young and full of energy, so I liked to spend most of my time outside climbing and swinging. Leo was in the same grade as I was in and his brother was a year younger. We instantly became friends at school and every day after school ended I would run home, do my homework as fast as I could, eat a snack and tie on my tennis shoes, and wait down stairs for the doorbell to ring.

On a sunny day like any other day in Texas, the sun never stops shining. On this day the sun was beating down on my back making tiny droplets of sweat trickle down my neck. Leo and I were bored and sitting out in front of my garage, so we decided to play volleyball. There wasn't really anything wrong except for the fact that we were really bad at volleyball and there was a fence leading to my mean neighbors' backyard. Don't get me wrong Mr. James, that was his name, was a kind old man when it came to talking about 50's music and his dog; my mother could talk to him for hours.

Leo and I were tossing the ball around when I hit it too hard and accidentally threw it over the fence. We went and asked if we could have our ball back. Mr. James gave us our ball back, but he seemed pretty mad we had thrown the ball over his fence. This happened another two times and by the third time Mr. James yelled in my face, "I'm not getting your ball!"

My immediate reaction was to scatter back to my garage knowing that I would never see that ball again. That was my favorite ball with princess designs all over it; therefore, I got really upset. My dad had gotten me that ball as a present for getting good grades in school. Leo noticed I had gotten pretty upset; he came over to where I was sitting, gave me a hug, and slowly whispered, "Don't worry I'll get your ball." I watched him as he climbed over the fence to get the ball for me.

When he climbed over the fence to get me my ball, I thought it was the nicest thing anyone had ever done for me, and when he gave me that hug I knew we were going to be friends for a long time. I think it's silly that at a young age we worry about the silliest things because we really don't know what cruelties there are out in the world and I wish I could go back to that worry free time when getting a ball in Mr. James' yard was my biggest concern and hanging out in my garage was the best thing on the planet.

The Most Valuable Treasure: Childhood by Fernanda Dale

When I could fit inside my Dad's suitcase, and when I didn't know how to take a bath alone. When boys were germs, and not a reason for fighting. When 9:30 P.M. was late, and when there were no due dates. Homework was as easy as going down the slide, and there were no worries about zits or getting fit. When we cried over cuts and not over guys. I remember when my dad could still put me up on his shoulders, because my weight was as light as a leaf. When computers were only used to play Club Penguin and our Facebook only had pictures of dogs, cats, and cute pandas. I remember wanting to be a singer; however, I didn't know how to sing. When English was hard as a diamond and Portuguese was all I could speak. Bad words were sins, and every trip to the playground was an adventure. When our only responsibility was bringing a towel to nap time.

We're all pirates somehow. We all keep treasure and secrets. Childhood is our most valuable treasure. Memories that will be remembered for ever, and stories that you will tell your kids without being able to finish because you'll be laughing very hard. A kid, full of energy and magical spirit, is the happiest kid in the world, with no worries or regrets. Childhood was worth much more than gold to me.

PERSUASIVE ESSAYS

NOUNS

VERBS

ADVERBS

ADJECTIVES

PREPOSITIONS

PROTAGONIST

SETTING

THESES

PLOT

TOPIC

MAIN Idea



Fendi

Persuasive Essays
by The Class of 2016
Illustrations by Federico Ivanissevich

The Best Remedy

by Giulia Barreto

Did you know listening to music improves concentration, coordination and learning skills? Researchers found out that children that have the habit of listening to music improve their skills in several ways. Teachers should let students listen to music while working in the classroom.

Music not only improves reading, math, and science skills, but also increases our self-esteem. Usually while listening to music we sing, and dance, which obviously proves we're happy. Schools should let students listen to music because it helps the student to analyze and understand their assignments. "One study demonstrated that second-grade students who were given keyboard training while also using math software scored higher on proportional math and fractions tests than students who used the software alone. And students who have been involved in public school music programs score higher on their SATs than those who don't." (Kids Health)

Classical music is the best remedy according to pickthebrain.com. It relaxes the person's mind, making him/her forget the "outer world" distractions and make it possible to organize his/hers thoughts. "Mozart works very well, because his rhymes resonate with human brain waves. Whether this is true or not, classical music is a great tool for increasing concentration and productivity." It's very helpful when you're doing something boring, for example. Then when you start listening to music, it catches your attention making you focus on what you're doing and increases your creativity. "Even if we aren't paying attention our brain counts each note and change of rhythm. This counting occupies the part of the mind that hinders our creative abilities. Like a soothing lullaby, music puts the worrisome unfocused part of the mind to sleep so the productive side can get to work" (Pick the Brain).

Listening to music after explanations shouldn't be forbidden because it drives students' attention from some distractions. Music acts like a white background improving concentration. "One reason is because music acts like a white noise in the background preventing students from noticing every other little thing that usually distract them." (Hartjes). For sure, students should pay attention to assignments so they know what to do, but listening to music while working helps students be more productive in class.

While listening to music, you are not only activating the creative part of the brain but you're also learning new words and improving listening skills. It's very helpful if you're learning a new language. Music makes you understand the whole thing (what the music talks about) and it catches your attention, making you look up the meaning of some words. This obviously improves vocabulary skills, which makes students be more productive in class. The same goes for listening skills. By listening you also learn how to pronounce words correctly.

Music acts in our brains as a relaxant that makes us forget about distractions like pencils dripping and activates our creative part of the brain. After listening to music while completing an assignment, you'll end up with a more creative and productive work.

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Just a Boring Story **by Gustavo Sa**

Don't you just hate to read an extremely boring book? Well, "The Diary of a Young Girl" by Anne Frank is one of those books where you sleep while reading it. This book could not get more repetitive than a broken record, but the worst is that it doesn't even have a good climax. "The Diary of a Young Girl" is definitely a book I would never recommend.

"Peter loves me not as a lover but as a friend and grows more affectionate every day." (Frank 249) This sentence is simply a bacteria compared to the millions of paragraphs that Anne wrote about this boy called Peter. As soon as she meets Peter practically all 283 pages of her diary has at least one paragraph about him. This is the main cause of why the book is so repetitive; of course, you wouldn't have much to write about when you are hiding in a small room without the freedom to go out, but that is no excuse to only write about a boy.

How fun can a book be when the main character seems to have multiple personalities? Anne Frank seems to be bipolar because she can never decide how she is really feeling; for example, one day she is as happy as sunshine and the next she wants to cut her wrists. "In general public feeling over the Russian front is optimistic again, because that is terrific!" (Frank 193) After only one day Anne wrote this, "And yet everything is so difficult." (Frank 194) Anne Frank's emotions can get you extremely confused to what is going on in the story.

The climax of a story is supposed to be the most exciting part of the novel, but what if the climax of the story is just boring? Anne Frank's story does not have an exciting climax at all. The most exciting point of the story would be considered Anne's "big kiss" with Peter, which wasn't exciting at all. Frankly, watching a snail would have been more fun than the "climax" of the story.

The book "Diary of a Young Girl" can really suck all the fun and happiness right out of you. It is just a repetitive and confusing book to read, without any excitement point what so ever. Now that you know how boring it is I trust you will make the right decision to not read it.

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Be Proud, Use a School Uniform **by Antonio Braga**

Although many people may argue against school uniforms, I believe that they are extremely important and, therefore, should be mandatory in all schools. Uniforms avoid the exclusion of students due to the clothes. Uniforms also prevent inappropriate clothing, help with the identification of students and save their children's parents from spending a lot of money on clothes for their kids.

Sometimes people may be bullied or excluded by others because of what they wear. The two main reasons for someone to commit this bullying and exclusion to others is that the victim may be wearing a shirt from a different country, political party, religion and in some cases even a rival sport's club. The second reason for this bullying and exclusion to occur is that the victim may be wearing second hand clothes. "Children invariably tease those who do not have trendy clothes", (Pros and Cons of School Uniforms). Both these factors are easily prevented with the implementation of uniforms in schools.

In addition, according to the article "Arguments about Uniforms," school uniforms also prevent students from wearing inappropriate clothes; for example, clothes that have offensive sayings or that call attention to sexuality. (Angel Fire) "Sweatpants that read "juicy" across the back and shirts that read "sexy" and "Jesus is Dead" are distractions (...)." (Owen 2). This statement backs up the article "Arguments about Uniforms," proving that many people have this point of view. Both these types of inappropriate clothing are extremely hard to create specific rules against because people may argue

that something considered inappropriate by some may be normal to others. It's vital that students cooperate with the staff and for the staff to create detailed rules to avoid problems with clothing. All this can be avoided with uniforms. Another advantage of school uniforms is that they facilitate the identification of students and, consequently, avoid intruders from entering the school and causing harm to members of the student body and staff.

Finally, school uniforms help parents to save money because instead of having to buy several different clothes for their kids, they can simply buy clothes for parties and weekends, instead of having to buy clothes for the whole week. Also, uniforms avoid kids from pressuring their parents to buy brand clothes so that they can show off at school. On the other hand, some people argue that school uniforms don't avoid parents from saving money, but actually make them waste more money because they state that non-brand clothes can have an equal or even cheaper price than uniforms.

Schools should demand students to wear uniforms; however, many others think that they are not necessary. Despite what you may think about school uniforms, you must admit that there are some strong reasons for the mandatory implantation of uniforms in schools.

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The Importance of Bilingual Education by Isabela Oliveira

Nowadays, there are 6,700 recognized languages around the world. Most of these languages are spoken by fewer than 1,000 people. ("Linguistic Society of America") Communication keeps languages alive around the world, and for that to be possible we need to be able learn new languages. Bilingual education is essential and should be available to all. Its importance is so big, that it has been proven that as soon as you start to learn another language, soon you will start to help others.

Language has been linked to the death of cultures, a way of life and the collective identity of its speakers ("Awaye!"). For many other reasons its importance is present. The power to save cultures can be reached with bilingual education. When someone is capable of learning it is a great start to choose another language. It opens a broad door to his or her future and learning environment. The standards of this student may go higher than usual and it's capacity of thinking too.

Bilingual education should be available to all. Schools have been attempting to include it in their curriculums a second language class, which is so important like Math. Unfortunately most of these schools are private schools and most of the population cannot afford them. So the next step for a better community should be in favor of bilingual education in public school, because everyone should have the same rights as others.

People say many things about bilingual education since it all started three decades ago. That it is harmful for children's academic performance, prolongs the time it takes them to learn their native

language, and delays their integration with other students. Some critics said that bilingual education is just an example of “bloat- a self-serving, costly bureaucracy concerned more with job protection than with teaching English” (“Bilingual Education.”). Researchers from The University of California proved the opposite in 1997 with exemplary students and schools. Bilingual education leads to inclusion, enrichment, flexibility, coordination, and internal impetus from the student’s results with their second language knowledge.

In an overall look bilingual education helps to build great futures for all. For the ones who are bilingual they certainly have a great responsibility ahead. A new goal has been traced, to become a third language speaker. You gain more knowledge as many languages you speak and consequently you save more cultures.

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A Powerful Pig by Gabriel Zlatkin

“Animal Farm” is a must read novel. “Napoleon is always right” is a sentence that pictures what the book is all about. Animal Farm is a book full of allegories where animals from a farm rebel to create a communist society. This communist society is referred to as Animalism in the book. This book also contains “scenes” that might alter the way of thinking of the reader; therefore, this is a book that everyone should have the opportunity to read.

One of the main reasons this book is a spectacular book is because it uses allegory to represent several important facts and situations of the Soviet Revolution. The allegory is very well done, such as in the case of Napoleon, the protagonist and pig, representing Stalin; Snowball, another pig, representing Trotsky; Squealer, a biased pig, representing propaganda; Boxer, a horse, representing the working class, Frederick, a human on a neighboring farm, representing Adolf Hitler; and so on. With those allegories George Orwell was able to talk about very marking moments during the Soviet Revolution

such as the Soviet Pact that occurred in 1939, the German invasion 1941, and the Tehran conference in 1943.

Another positive aspect and reason to read the book “Animal Farm” is that it talks about the concept of communism. It also shows how it is hard for communism to work because of how humans are greedy. This is very easy to be recognized at the moment when Napoleon (Stalin) changes the commandments that he made before for his own benefit, while others were working harder and harder. This is not only illustrating a person who is very greedy, but also illustrates a ruler who abuses power; in fact, this is another topic that the book covers well by practically morally warning the reader of abuse of power. With this, an observation that is often made is that communism might lead to dictatorship because normally a society will need a leader so it can work in an organized manner.

“Animal Farm” is an extraordinary book; therefore, it became a classic. This novel will not only teach you history and English, it will make you see many of the human’s strengths and weaknesses, and will make you become a lot more open minded then you think you are. Buy a copy and read it today!

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Should Public Schools Have Uniforms? by Mariana Machado

Middle school is typically a time when teenagers begin to distinguish themselves from one another, students begin to build up their own sense of personal style, trying to both fit in and stand out at the same time. Being self-conscious and not having the confidence needed to express themselves truly, teens tend to express themselves through clothing. A discussion that has been going on for a long time is whether public schools should have uniforms or not. Would you, an EARJ student, be pleased about dressing up exactly like 800 other students and losing your individuality for no reason? Some people say uniforms are cheaper, improve academic outcomes and diminish the pressure to have trendy clothes, but expert based studies don’t agree; therefore, students shouldn’t be forced to wear uniforms to school.

According to Jodee Redmond, an expert on uniforms in school, an extremely important part of growing up is discovering what you like and what you don’t. She and many others believe you express your opinions and tastes by choosing what you want to wear. With everyone wearing the same clothes as you, you would lose your individuality and right of self-expression, and that could be really harmful for your growth. People in favor of wearing uniforms to school say that with the uniforms, there’s no pressure to wear trendy clothes, but that doesn’t make sense because whether you like it or not, in the real world, you will be judged by what you wear.

Some specialists say that uniforms help the student’s academic performance and attendance. Would you agree with that? I mean, how can someone’s clothes help their grades and attendance? Many publication make the case that uniforms do not improve school safety and academic discipline. (Brunsma) According to Marian Wilde, when students are not able to express oneself through clothing, students start making inappropriate use of jewelry, make-up, shoes and accessories in order to be different from everyone else. There were schools in Ohio that made uniforms mandatory. These Ohio students began wearing uniforms, but their behavior, grades, and attendance did not improve.

It is generally thought that having school uniforms would be cheaper than actually wearing your own clothes to school because they are made to last and kids wouldn’t need to buy expensive clothes for school. If you stop and think about it, uniforms wouldn’t be cheaper than regular clothes because kids would still want and need trendy clothes to wear outside school. They wouldn’t be able to wear their uniforms to places where regular clothes are the style. Also, mandatory uniforms wouldn’t be cheaper for poor families because they usually buy in second-hand stores, at sales, or in tremendously cheap stores.

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Cloning by Huimin Chu

Can you imagine a world of people who look exactly the same? Being simply one of another 7 billion clones? It might seem interesting and puzzling at first thought, but you will notice that there are several unappealing characteristics of this world that might scare you. Cloning is frightening in many ways that makes it become something that shouldn't be done.

First of all, cloning is inefficient. It is not practical to clone, and the success rates are only from 1 to 4 percent (Bonsor), which is extremely low. Even if a clone is made, there are high chances that the clone will have some kind of defect after birth. One example of this is Dolly, the first mammal clone, in which it took 247 tries to "make"; therefore, cloning is inefficient and impractical because of all of the process issues (BBC News).

Secondly, cloning does not mean that you can control exactly what person the clone will be. You might think that if we create a clone of Albert Einstein, a genius like him will be created, but in truth, it does not all depend on genes. A great part of "who" a person is has to do with what a person does and goes through in life (Sample 41). An example for this would be identical twins, who even looking alike are still not the same person. Making the exact copy of a person regarding the personality and mentality is virtually a myth, which would make it equal, if not less, to natural reproduction.

Finally, there are the moral matters to this subject. Cloning simply goes against, not only our human nature, but also our nature itself, and this applies to Dolly. "Dolly was, quite literally, made. She is the work not of nature or nature's God but of man, an Englishman, Ian Wilmut, and his fellow scientists" (Kass 3). Cloning is not meant to be, and is not good for the psychological health of the clone; furthermore, the identity of a person is very important to the health of that person. Also, some people think of using the clones as labor force or to replace organs of the "real" humans with the clone's organs, but that would be no better than enslaving or killing a person, which is completely unethical and could be compared to slavery from old times. Basically, cloning is simply not supposed to happen and goes against our nature.

I believe everything has a reason to it, including the way people are supposed to reproduce, and that is not by cloning. Cloning goes against nature, and there is simply no reason to clone. This all makes me think that instead of why not clone, we should be asking: Why clone?

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Homework is Not Only Boring, It is Bad for You! by Wolfgang Heger

Tired and stressed? It's time to understand that this comes from homework. Does homework really help you? Some studies have suggested that students do not need homework to achieve good grades. ("Do Kids Need Homework?") This is an important reason to say that it sucks. No homework means that all students can finish the year with good grades and without homework. I am sure that most of the students think homework is torture; therefore, students should not have homework.

Homework was created in the late 1800s and the early 1900s. Homework was given in most schools. Then, very soon, they understood that homework might not be that good for the children. In the 1940s, homework, once again, began to be popular. ("The History of Homework") It was thought that homework was a good exercise for the brain. As education changed, the type of work that was given changed too. Homework became more creative and went beyond memorization.

At this time, experts found other problems in giving homework. Some teachers like Mr. Sagare give too much work and this can have a negative impact on a child's health. One of the biggest impacts is that when a student gets the news of a test, he becomes stressed and this hinders his sleep. Then the next day, he is very tired and he cannot concentrate. Another problem is that when teachers give a "billion" things for homework, you do not have time to participate in after school activities. Without these after school activities many students can become obese and get sicknesses, such as congestive heart failure and Gastro esophageal Reflux Disease.

Other experts feel that homework continues to be the best thing for your child to review the concepts that have been taught in school. This is right when the student gets one or two homework assignments per week for each class, but this never happens. Kids who suffer from homework overload are often stressed out and angry, which increases the amount of fights between them.

Homework is not the best solution because it makes students upset and, also, destroys them. Maybe it is still a good way to learn and revise your work, but teachers give too much homework and that's the problem. "The claim that homework evokes long-term discipline [is] largely unsupported by extensive empirical work, but there is reason to believe that many other extracurricular factors in the life of a child and young adult contribute substantially to this virtue." (Buell)

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Does Death Make a Difference? by André Schweizer

Can you imagine being killed because of no apparent reason? Well, that's a reality for a few people. The ones who know about these cases ask themselves: is the death penalty really fair and efficient? Undoubtedly, the answer is no.

Although some may say the death penalty stops people from committing crimes, there is proof that says it actually does the opposite. In 1958, all of the ten states that recorded the most murder cases supported the death penalty (Ornellas). In agreement with that, in a research promoted by ACLU, police officers that are currently working said that the death penalty is the least effective method of reducing crime ("The Case"). As Albert Camus wrote in his book "Resistance, Rebellion and Death," "For centuries the death penalty, often accompanied by barbarous refinements, has been trying to hold crime in check; yet crime persists." Besides creating more crimes, the death penalty is extremely expensive.

Many people think that the keeping of someone in prison uses too many resources: food, water, clothing, etc., and is, therefore, very expensive. However, the death penalty is far more expensive; in California, the system costs 137 million dollars a year ("Death Penalty Cost"). In the same state, the system without the death penalty would cost way less: \$11.5 million ("Death Penalty Cost"). Furthermore, in Maryland, a single death penalty case costs the public 3 million dollars; three times more than what it would cost without the killing of the guilty one. In addition, the government is spending more money on these matters than it should since there are death penalty cases that aren't supposed to happen.

Unlike what the majority of our society may think, the penalty is not fair, and the reason for that is prejudice. There are suspects who were sentenced due to discrimination: 53% of the 4220 prisoners executed until 1996 were black ("The Case"). Considering all of the other existent races, it is a large percentage. As Raymond Paternoster stated in his article, "black offenders who slay white victims are more likely to be sentenced to death than other racial combinations given the fact that a homicide is death eligible." (Paternoster) Therefore, at least ten innocent suspects have been killed since 1945 (Dieter).

Can you imagine having someone that you love being killed just because the jury chose so? The death penalty isn't efficient; it only creates more crimes. But most important of all, it's unfair. Ask yourself the question: "Does the death penalty really make a difference?"

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Believe It or Not "The Wave" is a Must Read By Bruno Violland

Have you ever read a book that was so shocking, that if anyone told you it was a true story, you wouldn't believe it in a million years? The book written by Todd Strasser, "The Wave" is one of those books. "The Wave" is an awesome book, not only because of its great story, but because it is non-fiction. This book is based on an incident that occurred in a high school history class in Palo Alto, California, in 1969. The book is about a teacher that wants to show his students, why people followed Hitler, so he created an experimental movement called "The Wave" for the students to understand what happened at that time. The novel, "The Wave," is a must read book for middle school students.

At first, all the students agreed to be part of an experimental movement that their teacher, Mr. Ross, was doing; yet, they were not getting along with that very well. "That was the most disorganized mess I've ever seen, this isn't duck, duck, goose, this is an experiment in movement and posture." (Strasser 32) That's the beginning of a incredible movement that will control the whole school and make people do things you can't even imagine.

On the second day of history class something strange was happening, instead of the students coming in Mr. Ben's class straggling in and making it a madhouse; the students come in and sat in neat rows with little noise. At each desk there was a student sitting in perfect posture, the way Mr. Ben had taught them the day before. The class was like a military base, everyone waiting for Mr. Ben's orders. That's a really shocking thing to happen since the day before they had absolutely no idea how to sit in posture and to come in the room quietly, than suddenly, the next day, they make it perfect. They've

tried about 17 times to make it right, and couldn't do it, the day before. One thing that you may also like in this book is that since the characters are about our age (14-18) you may have connection between your life and theirs.

After this class "The Wave" began to spread very quickly, and took control over the whole school. There were only two students that noticed they shouldn't continue with "The Wave", Laurie and David. They told their parents and tried to stop it. It was very hard to stop a movement that size, it was like a squirrel trying to stop an elephant from walking. The students and the parents knew what was happening; they knew that the sooner they stopped it, the better. 'I was there when it began. The whole idea was to show how something like Nazi Germany could have happened, it wasn't for us to become little Nazis'. (Strasser 87) "The Wave" went too far. What happened to the school and with "The Wave" movement is unbelievable and exciting. You will be so curious about what happens next that you won't be able to put the novel down.

The novel that Todd Strasser wrote is a book that should be read. It's interesting, surprising, and a little bit euphoric. You may get curious and nervous at the end, because you might think is kind of disappointing, but the book is still worth it. The most amazing thing about story is that there are so many shocking parts that you won't believe it really happened. The movement that Mr. Ross created became more than a class experiment; it became dangerous.

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Say Yes to Uniforms! by Isabela Souza

Not all schools expect the student body to wear uniforms, but if they did, the learning environment would be healthier. If all schools required students to wear uniforms, students would feel more equal, they would not have to buy a lot of clothes and there would be no dress code issues.

School uniforms would help students feel more equal because they would not have clothes competition as it happens nowadays. Clothes competition between students can bring many problems and it is also a way to start bullying. Many times students feel like they do not fit in because of the different types of clothes that their friends wear. School uniforms help to not form cliques and gangs since people do not identify themselves in a specific group. Bullying can sometimes be based on the victim's physical appearance. It would be more visually pleasing for the students and teachers if the students wore uniforms since they make the students look more like a united group.

Another very important point that supports the idea of students wearing uniforms is that the uniform will help the less fortunate to not feel bad because their friends have better and more expensive clothes than them. Wearing uniforms would save money since parents and students would not have to buy a lot of clothes. Therefore, students can save their nicer clothes for special occasions. Furthermore, there would be no need to show off brands, so nobody is singled out. School uniforms show school spirit and it also helps the kids to not worry too much about how they look because, obviously, they are in school to learn and not to party. In addition, the uniforms remind them that they are in school.

Finally, adopting school uniforms would avoid having dress code issues, and, consequently, school administration and students will not be stressed out. As well as helping people to feel more relaxed, school uniforms help build a sense of community because the uniforms contribute to make students feel more equal, cleaner and organized. The uniforms also reduce distractions because everyone will look the same.

In conclusion, wearing uniforms to school would help students to feel more equal, to save money on clothes and to focus more since there would be no dress code issues. "And if it means that kids will stop killing each other over designer jeans, then our public and private schools should require

the students to wear uniforms.” (Clinton). With that said, all schools should make students wear proper uniforms.

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You Will Adore “Soldier Boys” by Camilla Ferraz Zanini

Soldier Boys by Dean Hughes is an all time favorite story. It’s intriguing for whoever reads it. For those who like either tragic or sympathetic will definitely adore this book. This is a story where both boy and girl will love. It’s all a puzzle game leaving you breathless and wanting to read more to know what’s going to happen. Dieter and Spence (our protagonists) share their proper view of the war, which is far more interesting than reading a non-fictional book. This is an exciting, decision-making book, and is open for all public (all ages).

There is such precision and accuracy when Spence and Dieter narrate their very own personal thoughts and emotions about the war. It looks like you’re inside the battle feeling every desperate breath and all the weight on your shoulders. Spence is an American soldier fighting against Germans, and Dieter is a German soldier fighting against the Americans. Just imagine that! It seems like to birds fighting in a miniature cage. “ Are you proud of the enemy you killed or not!” (Schaefer 192). War penetrates people’s mind, especially the soldiers. Spence and Dieter took their biggest decision ever in life. Soldier Boys is very similar to a puzzle game above all.

Have you ever been frustrated when being afraid of making a move and blow up the chance of winning? Soldier Boys is just like that. In fact, it is very similar to a puzzle game. Once all pieces are brought together, everything makes sense. “ Dieter, I’ll tell you what you’re fighting for.”(Schaefer 192). Hitler at that time made the soldiers look like dolls, which were commanded by him. He tricked boys like Dieter who now has to reflect upon Schaefer’s ideas. I personally got excited and wanted to read more. Every time Dieter discovered the real meaning of war, it just made me want to keep Reading. Soldier Boys is a book where you need time to reflect. Reflect about the story and try to understand the conflict. Many confrontations arose in the story, and this is what makes this story interesting.

No matter how old you are, the same appreciation will be kept. I’m sure boys will get very diverting to read about war strategies and how it differs from a virtual game. It’s undoubtedly that girls will get their hearts melted with compassion and loyalty in this book. “ The pain in the boy’s voice was pitiful. It hurt Spence, got inside him.”(Hughes 210).

This shows that of all zillions of people in this world, all of them inside have a big heart. “ What Spence saw was desperation, dependence. The boy had to know he was dying, know this American offered his

only hope.” Page 219. For me this states that prejudice at the end will never win. “ I will help you if I can.” Page 217. Loyalty stands above all superiors and Soldier Boys demonstrates it.

In conclusion, as to summing it all up, tough decisions, awkward moments, loyalty and reflections about the book all mix up together and make up a juicy sandwich just like Spongebob’s. Anyone is welcome to read this book. It proves that anxiety has very well influenced others such as me, and I bet you could be the next one!

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Say No to the Death Penalty by Tiago Valim

The death penalty has been an increasingly used for of punishment for serious crimes like murder. The death penalty is unjust because a lot of things can interfere with it, like technology, money, science and social causes. The capital punishment is also a wrong form of “correction” because it encourages people to be vengeful and it sends the wrong message. Being incarcerated until you die is a lot worse than a quick painless death, and that is why we should put an end to this horrible for of castigation. The death penalty is wrong and should be reconsidered by people all over the world.

One of the reasons why we should stop the death penalty is because it is unethical to people. You can never be completely sure that a person is a murderer, mistakes do happen and we cannot let someone die over mistakes made by science. Guiltless people have been killed over capital punishment and those families still mourn over the unjustifiable mistake that occurred. A person who has more money, better lawyers, and has a better social status might have a lesser chance of getting the death penalty, because of blackmail and the strong influence of the media. Crime punishment should be fair, but unfortunately it is not.

The death penalty encourages people to kill each other, it sends the message that revenge is acceptable in our modern society, but it isn’t. Killing a murderer does not bring the person they assassinated back, so why kill criminals? There is no answer to that question; there is no good reason for the death penalty. Killing another person goes against everything we have ever learned, it goes against all that our parents taught us when we were younger, it goes against every principle and all human rights We do not have the right to take the life of another person, even though they took the life of another, the shouldn’t decrease to their level. Killing is wrong. Revenge should not be the answer to our societies social problems, we must be civilized and follow the crime punishment system, it has it’s flaws but one way or another that person will get what they deserve, but the answer death. Don’t kill.

Spending the rest of your life in a 6x8ft cell is a lot worse that a quick easy death, so why are we still killing people? What do we gain from murder? It has not been proved that the idea of the death penalty scare others killers when planning a crime “ I have never heard a murderer say they thought about the death penalty as a consequence prior to their actions” (Ruff). Killing people is not a moral thing to do. Death can only be painful for a few seconds, but spending years in a small jail cell, eating bad food and being lonely all day long is a lot worse. The murderer will be stuck there for the rest of his/her life and will not be able to do any more evil; if we want them to really suffer they have to be alive for that.

As it has been emphasized in this essay, the death penalty is cruel, inhuman, and unfair. Capital punishment encourages revenge and it sends the clear message that killing is the way to stop crime, well it isn’t. We must lock theses murderers, rapists, and pedophiles up for life, not kill them. Death is just not good enough for some people. Killing people is not the way to solve crimes; we must have a working society system to punish these criminals. We must not be vengeful. Stop the killing.

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Your Number One Choice for Literature Circles: "Soldier Boys" By Rodrigo Dacosta Freitas

How many times have you received a book that seemed to be interesting and you read it; however, the book was dreadful and dull. With "Soldier Boys" by Dean Hughes you will never get bored. In this book you will join two young soldiers Spence, a young America boy, and Dieter, a valiant soldier from Germany, battling in one of the bloodiest wars of human kind: World War II. You will never grow tired of this novel for countless reasons, this book has an amazingly smart and a very good storyline, you have never read a better book then "Soldier Boys."

You may have read amazing books such as "Holes," "Harry Potter," and more, but none are as good as "Soldier Boys." This book is the best book in the universe because it has a very realistic story of what may have happened during World War II. "The Germans had made good headway those first few day, had made a deep bulge in the American defense line. The battle of the Bulge..." (Hughes) This is based on a true battle, there was an actual battle in the Ardennes in France and its name was the battle of the Bulge. This battle was one of the battles that turned the whole war around when the Germans were starting to retreat and the Allies began to attack the Germans by all sides forcing them to retreat back into Germany. This book isn't only fun and interesting but it tells about a real battle!

This book will be the best book you've read because it has a very intelligent and fun storyline. At the beginning of the book it tells the story of how both boys wanted to join the war. It shows Dieter and Spence during their training to become a good soldier in boot camp. The book shows in every little detail possible how Spence did in his first jump out of an airplane. It illustrates Dieter's first day in action; the first day he saw someone die. It goes on and on until the big battle between them. This book will never let you become bored.

Some people may not like this book because of its sad ending. People can be very sensitive about this type of ending. These people will probably like the whole story until the end, but, never the less, these are only a few people because this book is the type of book that you can read once, twice, and three times, you will never get as bored as a sloth.

“Soldier Boys” by Dean Hughes will be the best book you’ll ever have read. This book is the best you’ll ever read because of its outrageously smart and amazing storyline on the subject of World War II. In 8th grade during literature circles, when you get your paper for choosing a book, “Soldier Boys” by Dean Hughes should be the first book on your list.

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Liquids on Airplanes by Isabel X. de Brito

When going on leisure or work-related trips, the last worry we want to have, is that of losing our baggage or being limited about what we can carry inside them. Unfortunately, we are all familiar with the flaws pertaining to the airline companies. Research has lead to the conclusion that about 3,000 pieces of luggage are lost every hour in airports all over the world (Charmicael). But, in actuality, the worst part regarding how our belongings are handled, are the limitations imposed on what we can carry with us, in addition, to all the mistakes in tagging and loading the baggage. Because of terrorist attempts to threaten the security of people, airports have made strict measures to protect people, harming the comfort of the passengers. Airlines shouldn’t have such extreme rules against taking personal belongs with you during air travel.

The changes in airport security occurred after terrorist attempts to explode an airplane flying over the Atlantic Ocean. This event occurred in 2006 and, based on it, the airlines decided to make more rigorous rules, however unnecessary, for what you could and could not take with you on an airplane. Because of this no passenger can take more than 100 ml of any liquid for carry-on luggage. Airline staff saw this change in rules as a solution to terrorism threats. They believed a strong explosive would not be able to fit into a 100ml container; however, this idea changed within a short amount of time.

Another safety measure taken in airports is the x-ray machines. However, this system is still completely weak towards safety, since the machines are not able to see the difference between a bottle of water and a bottle full of liquid explosives, such as Nitroglycerin or Triacetone Triperoxine (substances often used to make liquid explosives). So that’s when we ask ourselves, why are those machines really there, if they don’t do anything?

Both of these safety measures can be proven ineffective if we take into consideration other terrorists attacks. On the 2006 attack, the terrorists took 2 different explosive substances on the airplane; however, they were kept inside beverage cans. Their original plan was to mix the two substances while the airplane flew. But still, a similar plan could work nowadays, because instead of taking the liquids in beverage cans, you could just take several 100 ml bottles, and mix them inside the plane. Also, the x-rays couldn’t, and still can’t, detect the kind of liquids that are used as explosives.

The security procedures, such as the 100 ml limit, are very time consuming, and as most would say annoying. The feeling of being in a hurry to catch a plane is the worse feeling in the world, but it’s even worse when you are unnecessarily searched in the process. “Those dogs [from the airport security] already came sniffing our bags, they thought they smelled drugs or something suspicious, so we had to open our bag. It ended up that we were only carrying some food we had brought, but it really was inconvenient, and time-consuming,” says the 14 year old, Dominique Ellis, about the downsides of these procedures. Many others have the same opinion as Dominique; for example, Luciane Melo who says, “Once, [in the security scans] they took my tweezers. It was very annoying, plus I even had to buy another one once I reached my destination.”

Besides being expensive for airports and airlines, it is inefficient for passengers. “We are content

wasting billions of taxpayer dollars and untold hours of labor in a delusional attempt to thwart an attack that has already happened” (The Airport Security Follies). In 2010 the airplane companies invested over one billion dollars in security scans, and other plane safety procedures. The airport carry-on rule for liquids is unnecessary, and a waste of money and time. Its not preventing terrorist attacks, but it is creating more chaos and a mess. The bottom line is recent airline security changes are not protecting passengers, and they are causing unnecessary annoyances.

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“The Wave” Was Like a Real Wave by Camila Ramalho

“The Wave” by Todd Strasser is an amazing novel and you should read it. The story is about “a classroom experiment that went too far.” (Strasser back cover) In other words, it is about a normal high school history class that was watching movies about World War 2, but didn’t understand why people would follow Hitler. Frustrated, the teacher didn’t know the answer to that question; therefore, the teacher became curious about teaching students about how people would follow Hitler. He searched in thousands of books and finally thought of a way to show his students the answer. The story of how a teacher teaches his students about the rise of the Nazis is a must read because it teaches you about people rights, it is inspiring, and the novel is exciting and full of surprises.

Firstly, “The Wave” not only teaches us about everyone’s rights, it also shows us the consequences of treating people differently. This book is based on a real story; therefore, it could happen again. If something like this happened again it would be a disaster; people should read this book to be aware about the past and learn from those mistakes. In spite the fact that this book tells the story about a disaster, it doesn’t get boring or sad. Surprising events keep us entertained throughout the chapters.

Secondly, it is inspiring. After you read this book, you will appreciate more and be more grateful about your individual rights. It is a fabulous way of learning about World War 2, and how it started. The Wave, an organized group in the school, was spreading throughout the whole school; there were only a few people aware that it was dangerous. People who wrote the school newsletter wrote about The Wave and how dangerous it was. In time some students become aware of the fact that individual rights are being compromised and they do something about it.

Despite the fact that some people might say that "The Wave" is a boring book, I thought it was very interesting. I never thought something like that could happen; I was really amazed by the persistence of the people who wanted to stop the Nazi-like group known as The Wave. They were confident that "The Wave" wasn't good, confident enough to write an article about it. It also impressed me that the history teacher was afraid to stop The Wave or Nazi-like group. He was the one who started the experiment with the students and then he didn't have enough courage to stop it. After a long time reflecting if he should stop it or not, he comes up with a brilliant idea on how to stop the powerful Nazi-like group known as The Wave.

"The Wave" was like a real wave. Getting closer and bigger as it would come to an end. Covering the waters below it, it would break and slowly touch the sand. I never thought a classroom experiment like The Wave could become such a large movement in a school. "You traded your freedom for what you said was equality. But you turned your equality into superiority over non-wave members." (Strasser, 134).

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Gender Doesn't Impact Intelligence by Alice Luciani

Does gender matter when talking about intelligence? It's a question that a lot of people ask themselves. Throughout all history women have been discriminated, considered less intelligent and, consequently, inferior than men. However, this is a superficial analysis of the female sex.

People say that the male brain is more developed than the female one. In fact there are differences between the two sexes' brains, but that does not penalize any of the two. For instance, it is a true statement that men's brains are about ten percent bigger than the women's one. Though, in certain parts of the female's brain, neurons are more densely distributed. Doubtless, brain's size doesn't affect on the intellectual level, or else elephants and sperm whales would be way smarter than human beings are. Also, men tend to be better in skills like reading maps, while women score higher in terms of language development and emotional intelligence. But scientists agree that there's no real and important difference when it comes to gender-related intelligence.

Secondly, it is scientifically proved that men are not more mentally capable than women: they only think they are. This is just an illusion created in people's head, and British researchers reported that the male ego is often larger than their actual intellectual level, while women underestimate themselves and are often smarter than what it seems. Both sexes believe that their fathers are smarter than their mothers, and grandfathers are more intelligent than their grandmothers, which is false. Both women and men tend to perceive the male sex as cleverer and brighter, which is a wrong statement.

Other than that, we have to say that women actually changed the world as much as men did. Their normal imperceptibility was a result of the superficiality and stereotyping that society felt towards them; after all, as Shirley Chisholm says: "The emotional, sexual and psychological stereotyping of females begins when the doctor says, 'It's a girl'". Even though women were always underestimated, that doesn't mean they were absent from important events, or didn't play important roles in society. Women have made advancements and gave their contribution in every field of the human studies: science and technology, art and humanities, religion and popular culture; in every one of them there was a woman, or more than one, ready to give their contribution just as a man would have, and

sometimes even better. For example, Marie Curie won a noble price in science; Ada Lovelace was the first real computer programmer; Sophie Germain was a famous mathematician, philosopher and physicist; these were women known for their analytical kind of intelligence, while some, like Elisabeth I of England, were known for their practical kind of intelligence, and others, like Emily Dickenson, for their creative intelligence. All these women were smart women that gave their contributions to the world, just as a man would have. This is again proving that gender does not influence on mental capacity.

Women and men do have different brains and behaviors, but that doesn't mean one of the two sexes should be considered smarter than the other one. People should stop stereotyping women for being less intelligent and less capable than men, as they were always were the base of society.

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If You Have the Opportunity, Use It! by Guilherme Barbosa

Do you really think Bilingual Education doesn't have a positive affect in your life? If you agree with this statement, you better go immediately to the closest medic. Bilingual instruction can help you in your upcoming future; you can learn lots of new and different things like in our English class. Bilingual Education always yields to excellent results.

Some people say that learning a second language is a waste of time even though, with a second language, you can communicate with more people around the world. This is a very important objective because you can use this knowledge for jobs and negotiations in other countries. You can also meet different and trillions of new people from the Internet or face to face. Another goal is that you can also read articles and watch movies in this language you have learned.

With another language you may realize your wish of working or studying in a different country. With this privilege, you can learn a totally different culture. Comprehension of a different culture helps you achieve a very high level of literacy. It makes it easier to live in the country where they speak the second language you have learned. All this because you know it's idioms and, therefore, their way of life, and you're ready to go!

Some people think learning two languages at the same time may confuse the learner; however, bilingual education results in very high level of proficiency in both languages studied. After learning it, people can, therefore, teach other people. A second language makes you travel for tourism to other countries more often. Bilingual education helps you and many different aspects of life. According to

New York Times: "Majority-language children receive instruction through a second language result in high levels of proficiency in both languages". (Kershner)

People all around the world want this exceptional opportunity. They always look for this magnificent opportunity. With another language, you will be astute in the business world. I guarantee you that if you have this opportunity, take advantage of it, look for it, and you will be successful for the rest of your life.

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An Argument Against School by Clélio Alves

School, that's something that I don't support. I have to wake up early every day and come back home late at night. First, there are things that I would have rather not learned because I think it won't be useful for me in my future. Secondly, we spend 8 hours in school; we don't need all that time to learn. Third, when we get home at night, instead of being able to do what we want, we have to do homework. The bottom line is that we spend the whole day focusing in school; we do that for 5 days plus we have homework on Saturdays and Sundays. It's too much for me.

Another reason why I'm mad with the school is it also affects my future in a bad way. I want to be a soccer player. In Brazil, to be a soccer player, you need to play in a club. I would try to play for a club, but the school hours don't match with club's hours. The only way of being able to play for a club is if you drop out of school. One more reason I dislike school, is the system of the grades has something to do with sports. I think people with low grades should still go to the tournaments, and when they come back receive extra help. Sometimes low grades are not their fault.

I don't like school very much, but school is not so bad all the time. Sometimes we have teachers and friends that make it fun. If I could change something in school, I would change the amount of time we have to be there and need to study. We are young and need to enjoy life now, but school takes too much time away from our lives.

Civil Service in Brazil **by Antonio Franco**

In Brazil, when a man turns eighteen, he has to apply to civil service duty. This service can be the Army, the Navy, or the Air Force. In these services, men are trained to use weapons, to be part of a ship crew, to be prepared for combat, and to do exercise in order to be tough. Life in civil service is not easy. Men have to conform to strict rules, follow a routine, and obey their superiors.

Who would be interested in this career? Usually, men who don't have any other choices and are not interested in studying choose civil service. Many of these people choose to defend their country. Some of them even follow a career in civil services after their commitment is done.

Who would not be interested in civil service? The men who are in their last year of high school or getting ready to start university typically are the least interested. They feel that by participating in the civil service they would be interrupting their studies and delaying their graduation. Some times they make believe that they are sick or just say "I'm not interested" in order to avoid civil service duties.

As there are not too many places to be filled, the people in charge of the different civil services usually choose people who are willing to do it. In my opinion, civil service should not be mandatory, but this, of course, depends on the situation of the country.

"Gay Marriage: Yes or No?" **by Andre Pittella**

How would you feel if you were insulted for liking something others didn't, like a sport or school subject? It would feel awful, angering maybe. This is how the homosexuals, more commonly known as gays, have felt for all their lives. Homophobia, by definition, is an irrational and unreasonable feeling of disgust or hatred towards homosexuality. To the modern world, this is a big problem, and has existed since the founding of Christianity, or, more importantly, the publication of the Bible. This prejudice existed during WWII, where homosexuals were executed by the Nazis, and still exists today. However, some years ago, in 2001, Holland took a stand against this prejudice by legalizing gay marriage, commonly known as same-sex marriage. Ever since Holland's action, homophobia has quickly been dying out. Hopefully, other nations will follow Holland's lead in the fight for gay marriage rights.

Now, why does homophobia even exist in the first place? It's traced back to one or two lines in the Holy Bible. The lines, found in the entry of Leviticus, claim that, "And if a man lays with a man as he would with a woman, both of them have committed abomination: they shall surely be put to death," (Leviticus, 20:13) Well guess what ol' Leviticus also says, Rebellious children, men who swear, and even victims of rape must be put to death to cleanse their souls. So, just one line concerning homophobia is kept, whilst most of the other ramblings are ignored? But, because homophobia is unjustifiable as a phobia, any kind of justification given will not be taken into account. Leviticus may be the base of this, but not the reasoning.

In addition, marriage itself is in no way religious. It is merely and completely a civil right, not a religious right. Gay marriage's only difference from heterosexual marriage is that it is with the same gender. Marriage demonstrates civil cooperation between two given peoples, and is about the love shared, not the genders involved. It is true that countries, which have the governments integrated with religion, such as most Islam-based countries, still give life in prison sentences and death penalties to those who practice homosexuality. They see homosexuality as a sin in their religion. In Brazil and the United States, marriage is a civil right and the Bible should have no influence on marriage.

Even though homophobia has been around for just about two millennia, actions against it have only begun in the early 21st century. The Dutch Government passing a bill allowing gay marriage in 2001 was the event that started the snowball that got bigger and bigger as it rolled. Other government bills around the world have passed, like Belgium in 2003 and Norway in 2009. Various organizations combating homophobia and aimed on passing gay marriage rights for their country can be found worldwide. The Brazilian Rio Sem Homofobia Organization is aimed at eradicating homophobic elements

in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. They run TV commercials depicting a homophobic person and an activist for gay marriage in a conversation discussing both sides of gay marriage in the country; in order to promote government and public support for gay marriage. Consequently, legalizing gay marriage would heavily disgruntle the homophobic community.

Homophobia is only justifiable through focusing on a puny sentence from a book thousands of years old. As the greatest nations take action against this horrid force, many countries are still blinded by generalizations and stereotypes of the gay community. The UK claims to pass a bill legalizing same-sex marriage around 2015; Obama, the president of the US, recently supported gay marriage publicly; and the Rio Sem Homofobia Organization is at the front lines combating homophobia in Brazil. So, the next time you here an argument against gay marriage remember that it comes from a minuscule section of the Bible. The same section that suggests putting a rebellious child to death. Let's end this ridiculous debate and legalize gay marriage.

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I AM POEM

Pieces EXPERIENCE

OF

Cinquain

Emotional feeling

Messages Acrostic

SKetched EXpression



Haiku

Sonnet

Happy

DIAMANTE

Emotion

FREE VERSE

LOVE

LIMERICK

SADNESS

Fun

Poetry
by The Class of 2016
Illustrations by Federico Ivanissevich

Eon
by Ezequiel Gutierrez

The Time
Unseen and mute
It's beyond our control
It's eternal and immortal
Eon

A Fallen Star
by Sasha Szafir

A fallen star,
Incredibly far,
When descending from the sky
Smiled at everyone when it soared by,
Bright as the sun
It lightened the city
Even though the fallen star was so very far.

Love You Too Much to Let You Go
by Kenui Moliterno

We were perfect together
When I met you I knew what true love was
I thought we were gonna last forever
Then I realized what loving you too much does

I want you to know that I will always love you so
You were the one who made my tears run slow
You made me see, you made me grow
You are with someone else though
But I love you too much to let you go

I was the one who let you down
I was the one who made you frown but now that you've moved on
I think about you all day long

You are my angel and will always be
I dream at night that you'll come back to me
And whisper, "I choose you"
I know there are problems but we can make it though
Cause I'm blue without you

I want you to know that I will always love you so
You were the one who made my tears run slow
You made me see, you made me grow
You are with someone else though
But I love you too much to let you go

I love the way you smile
For you I'd run a mile

Just to hold you for a while
I love the way your tough
I love you just enough
Let's restart
Just follow your heart

I want you to know that I will always love you so
You were the one who made my tears run slow
You made me see, you made me grow
You are with someone else though
But I love you too much to let you go

The One and Only by Christopher Hearne

The one.
The one that is called the ladies man.
The one everybody looks up to.
The one that brings security to the insecure.
The one that feels the feelings and pain of fellow comrades.
Who am I?
The one and only
Super gorgeous
Super smart
Handsome devil
Lyrical genius
Voice of a generation
Christopher W. Hearne!

An Uncommon Giant by Nick Kalavritinos

I am uncommon,
A mix of many different faces.

Tall as the empire state building,
Quiet as an owl.
Calm as the Caribbean Sea,
I am a blue eyed beast.
Basketball all day long, active as a pro.

My imagination bigger than La La land.
Procrastinating is my hobby, but that's who I am.

War by Federico Ivanissevich

War is something bad
Something we don't ask for
It brings deaths, injuries, and violence
It is true evil
It is where people die all around you
Airplanes soaring above your head

All you can think about is your family and friends
A teardrop is all that is left of them
A faint memory, which you hold on to
For you know that this is the end
You try to be a soldier
You try to suck it up
You see your colleague next to you
And in a flash he is gone
He is engulfed by flames
Your only friend had been taken
Taken by the angel of death
A cold feeling comes to your arm
As you look to the sky, everything comes down
Rain falls everywhere
Covering all fires and deaths
As god mourns the death of a child
All the fires stop
All airplanes retreat
You see a white flag
An image you will never forget
The war finally ended
The beauty in the white was immense
The horrible war was over
All from a sign from god
That war isn't the answer.

Bruno
by Bruno Ribeiro

I don't know how to start this poem exactly
Do you have any idea how?
Because I certainly don't.
How exactly am I going to begin?
Do I start by describing myself?
Or do I start describing my appearance?
Perhaps I just talk about my feelings
Who can decide?

Well right about now I have to stop asking questions
That's one thing you can tell about me
I'm a staller and a big one
I could be called a hyena
Because when I open my mouth, noise comes out, but nothing that's useful.
One thing that I can't help to mention is that I'm stubborn
I'm stubborn as mule, probably much more
I'm more like a mountain
A huge, stubborn, and extremely lazy mountain
I'm actually impressed that I have written this much for a poem
But I'm also very ambitious kind of like a squirrel
Like the one from Ice Age.
My biggest dream is to become the best surgeon in the world

To have the honor to be called doc
And to wear that amazing uniform called scrubs
To have the chance to save someone's life, it is just incredible!
I will hold the scalpel as if it was a tool from god himself

I'm an American, that's why I don't have an accent
I was born in San Francisco, California
Where the strong winds, from the freezing bay, passes through my blond hair in a soothing matter.
Where the fog gently lowers itself down to a level where we could practically get a hand full of it
And mistake it for heaven itself
Gazing over the famous Golden Gate Bridge, seeing the icy bay and joyful people on the ferries
To see the "Home of Suffering", that is now a days a place to enjoy one self
To stand on a cliff, where the city lays itself completely under your chin
That was the sensation of living there

Living here in Brazil strikes a different sensation
Nor bad or good in particular
Feels like the sun is always beating down on my smooth skin
As if it wanted to bake me alive
Surrounded by a blue sky and an enormous green ocean, giving you a complete sense of comfort
To feel those cool winds releasing you from the chains of that uncomfortable heat
To see people suffering around you in a way that you didn't think it was possible
I don't only speak of poverty
It doesn't take many words to explain that
So there isn't a need for any further explanation

But I also see joy, happiness, and a neighborly relationship between strangers
At the end I adapted, like I always do
I'm not very fond about talking of myself
But I'm doing it anyway
I think it's because normally I'm the shyest person in the world
Or it's because I'm nervous out of my mind right now and I because I stutter a lot
This is all you have to know about me

A Haiku, Free Verse, and Cinquain by Stefano Frering

Haiku

Trees are beautiful
When the wind blows on their leaves
They sway in deep love

Free Verse

Once I climbed up a tree
And I had a broken knee
Suddenly a bee stung me
And I fell off the tree
I broke my other knee!

Cinquain

Puppies
Furry, pretty
They jump and play all day
Dogs are friendly and loyal pets
Canine

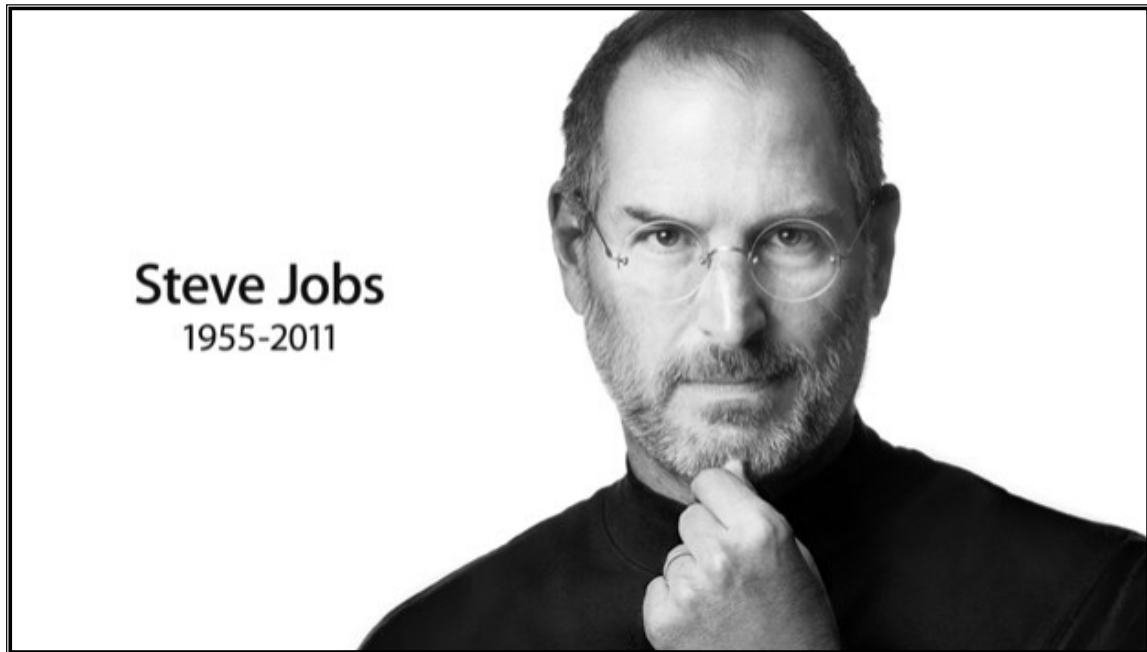
Bye Bye Sun by Karen Rivera

It's a tree, a lonely tree, standing on a lonely hill, watching the sunset.
The tree is black, but the sundown is yellow, orange, and red.
The sunset makes the tree look beautiful, shiny, and happy.
Its leaves dance with the wind a beautiful melody, they're happy too.
It looks peaceful, a place in which I would like to be,
in which loneliness is not pain but peace.
Beautiful things don't last forever; the sun is going now;
nevertheless, tomorrow they'll dance again. Bye bye sun.

Institute of Education by Namanh Kapur

I arrive inside the hallway,
On the day 12 of May,
I settle on the wooden seat,
Put on my headphones and play with the beat,
Scrutinize a women's mouth moving,
The writings disappeared, she's removing,
All the words from the blackboard,
As I whisper, this my hoard,
I slouch down,
My hoody's on the ground,
Grab it and throw it up,
Something touches me and I hear "Was sup,"
I turn around and look up,
A quick exchange of looks,
I distinguish the huge stack of books,
As he offers his hand,
Mine expand,
As I shake and punch,
The times up, bell for lunch,
The sound annoys me,
I stand up with my knee,
Pick up my bag pack,
Heading for the snack shack,
I fully rise,
As everyone starts to recognize,
It's our time to shine,
As I take my place in line,
I don't feel hungry anymore,

Feel as if I am on the sea shore,
I am overwhelmed with excitement,
Was this just an accident?
I am now fully awake,
I stretch and shake,
I hear another bell,
Followed by the ringtone of my cell,
My legs carry me out the door,
Sliding inches above the cold floor,
I breathe in the fresh air,
And follow the path to my own lair,
The day's come to an end,
Goodbyes are greeted to friends,
But schools only just started,
For tomorrow it will be bombarded,
By kids like me,
Who feel like they are free,
Tomorrow is another day,
For us kids to rejoice,
And continue this generation,
Make our ancestors proud,
For us to shout out loud,
As we sit in nations,
Thinking of world domination,
In teacher's place for examination,
In the heaven of population,
That's right, be happy,
Be thankful and glad cuz',
We still learn in the Institute of Education.



Tribute to Steve Jobs by Chris Hearne

I believe that everyone is born for a reason, everybody has a purpose in life, we all carry a crucifix on our back, once your purpose is fulfilled it's time to part. Steve Jobs carried a very heavy crucifix, he had a very important job to do, and this job would open thousands of new opportunities and set a new benchmark in human engineering.

He believed in simplicity, and had a mind set in connecting families and friend though his brilliant technology. He accelerated the future to the present. Steve Jobs has accomplished in his short 56-year lifetime what it would take at least 3 full life times to achieve. His life's work left us with hope, motivation and a much better future. He will always be remembered as one of the world's greatest pioneers.

He will never be forgotten, and will always remain in our hearts.

